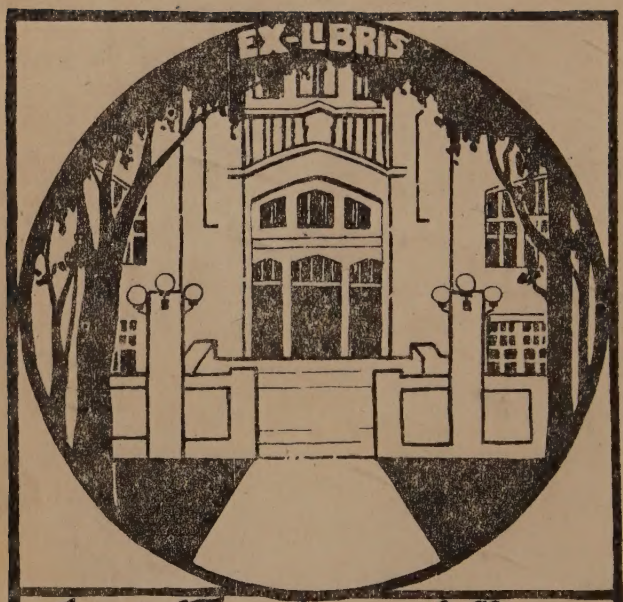
GEORGIAN POETRY

1920-1922



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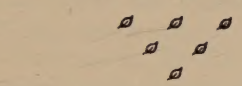

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PREFATORY NOTE

WHEN the fourth volume of this series was published three years ago, many of the critics who had up till then, as Horace Walpole said of God, been the dearest creatures in the world to me, took another turn. Not only did they very properly disapprove my choice of poems: they went on to write as if the Editor of *Georgian Poetry* were a kind of public functionary, like the President of the Royal Academy; and they asked—again, on this assumption, very properly—who was E. M. that he should bestow and withhold crowns and sceptres, and decide that this or that poet was or was not to count.

This, in the words of Pirate Smee, was *a kind of a compliment*, but it was also, to quote the same hero, *galling*; and I have wished for an opportunity of disowning the pretension which I found attributed to me of setting up as a pundit, or a pontiff, or a Petronius Arbiter; for I have neither the sure taste, nor the exhaustive reading, nor the ample leisure which would be necessary in any such role.

The origin of these books, which is set forth in the memoir of Rupert Brooke, was simple and humble. I found, ten years ago, that there were a number of writers doing work which appeared to me extremely good, but which was narrowly known; and I thought that anyone, however unprofessional and meagrely gifted, who presented a conspectus of it in a challenging and manageable form might be doing a good turn both to the poets and to the reading public. So, I think I may claim, it proved to be. The first volume seemed to supply a want. It was eagerly bought; the continuation of the affair was at once taken so much for granted as to be almost unavoidable; and there has

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been no break in the demand for the successive books. If they have won for themselves any position, there is no possible reason except the pleasure they have given.

Having entered upon a course of disclamation, I should like to make a mild protest against a further charge that *Georgian Poetry* has merely encouraged a small clique of mutually indistinguishable poetasters to abound in their own and each other's sense or nonsense. It is natural that the poets of a generation should have points in common ; but to my fond eye those who have graced these collections look as diverse as sheep to their shepherd, or the members of a Chinese family to their uncle ; and if there is an allegation which I would *deny with both hands*, it is this : that an insipid sameness is the chief characteristic of an anthology which offers—to name almost at random seven only out of forty (oh ominous academic number !)—the work of Messrs. Abercrombie, Davies, de la Mare, Graves, Lawrence, Nichols and Squire.

The ideal *Georgian Poetry*—a book which would err neither by omission nor by inclusion, and would contain the best, and only the best poems of the best, and only the best poets of the day—could only be achieved, if at all, by dint of a Royal Commission. The present volume is nothing of the kind.

I may add one word bearing on my aim in selection. Much admired modern work seems to me, in its lack of inspiration and its disregard of form, like gravy imitating lava. Its upholders may retort that much of the work which I prefer seems to them, in its lack of inspiration and its comparative finish, like tapioca imitating pearls. Either view—possibly both—may be right. I will only say that with an occasional exception for some piece of rebelliousness or even levity which may have taken

my fancy, I have tried to choose no verse but such as in Wordsworth's phrase

> The high and tender Muses shall accept
> With gracious smile, deliberately pleased.

There are seven new-comers—Messrs. Armstrong, Blunden, Hughes, Kerr, Prewett and Quennell, and Miss Sackville-West. Thanks and acknowledgments are due to Messrs. Jonathan Cape, Chatto and Windus, R. Cobden-Sanderson, Constable, W. Collins, Heinemann, Hodder and Stoughton, John Lane, Macmillan, Martin Secker, Selwyn and Blount, Sidgwick and Jackson, and the Golden Cockerel Press; and to the Editors of *The Chapbook*, *The London Mercury* and *The Westminster Gazette*.

E. M.

July, 1922.

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LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

RYTON FIRS

The Dream

All round the knoll, on days of quietest air,
Secrets are being told ; and if the trees
Speak out—let them make uproar loud as drums—
'Tis secrets still, shouted instead of whisper'd.

There must have been a warning given once :
No tree, on pain of withering and sawfly,
To reach the slimmest of his snaky toes
Into this mounded sward and rumple it ;
All trees stand back : taboo is on this soil.—

The trees have always scrupulously obeyed.
The grass, that elsewhere grows as best it may
Under the larches, countable long nesh blades,
Here in clear sky pads the ground thick and close
As wool upon a Southdown wether's back ;
And as in Southdown wool, your hand must sink
Up to the wrist before it find the roots.
A bed for summer afternoons, this grass ;
But in the Spring, not too softly entangling
For lively feet to dance on, when the green
Flashes with daffodils. From Marcle way,
From Dymock, Kempley, Newent, Bromesberrow,
Redmarley, all the meadowland daffodils seem
Running in golden tides to Ryton Firs,
To make the knot of steep little wooded hills
Their brightest show : O bella età de l'oro !
Now I breathe you again, my woods of Ryton :
Not only golden with your daffodil-fires
Lying in pools on the loose dusky ground
Beneath the larches, tumbling in broad rivers
Down sloping grass under the cherry trees
And birches : but among your branches clinging

Lascelles Abercrombie

A mist of that Ferrara-gold I first
Loved in the easy hours then green with you ;
And as I stroll about you now, I have
Accompanying me—like troops of lads and lasses
Chattering and dancing in a shining fortune—
Those mornings when your alleys of long light
And your brown rosin-scented shadows were
Enchanted with the laughter of my boys.

The Voices in the Dream

Follow my heart, my dancing feet,
Dance as blithe as my heart can beat.
Only can dancing understand
What a heavenly way we pass
Treading the green and golden land,
Daffodillies and grass.

I had a song, too, on my road,
But mine was in my eyes ;
For Malvern Hills were with me all the way,
Singing loveliest visible melodies
Blue as a south-sea bay ;
And ruddy as wine of France
Breadths of new-turn'd ploughland under them glowed.
'Twas my heart then must dance
To dwell in my delight ;
No need to sing when all in song my sight
Moved over hills so musically made
And with such colour played.—
And only yesterday it was I saw
Veil'd in streamers of grey wavering smoke
My shapely Malvern Hills.
That was the last hail-storm to trouble spring :
He came in gloomy haste,

Pusht in front of the white clouds quietly basking, *Lascelles Aber-crombie*
In such a hurry he tript against the hills
And stumbling forward spilt over his shoulders
All his black baggage held,
Streaking downpour of hail.
Then fled dismayed, and the sun in golden glee
And the high white clouds laught down his dusky ghost.

For all that's left of winter
Is moisture in the ground.
When I came down the valley last, the sun
Just thawed the grass and made me gentle turf,
But still the frost was bony underneath.
Now moles take burrowing jaunts abroad, and ply
Their shovelling hands in earth
As nimbly as the strokes
Of a swimmer in a long dive under water.
The meadows in the sun are twice as green
For all the scatter of fresh red mounded earth,
The mischief of the moles :
No dullish red, Glostershire earth new-delved
In April ! And I think shows fairest where
These rummaging small rogues have been at work.
If you will look the way the sunlight slants
Making the grass one great green gem of light,
Bright earth, crimson and even
Scarlet, everywhere tracks
The rambling underground affairs of moles :
Though 'tis but kestrel-bay
Looking against the sun.

But here's the happiest light can lie on ground,
Grass sloping under trees
Alive with yellow shine of daffodils !
If quicksilver were gold,

Lascelles Abercrombie

And troubled pools of it shaking in the sun,
It were not such a fancy of bickering gleam
As Ryton daffodils when the air but stirs.
And all the miles and miles of meadowland
The spring makes golden ways,
Lead here, for here the gold
Grows brightest for our eyes,
And for our hearts lovelier even than love.
So here, each spring, our daffodil festival.

How smooth and quick the year
Spins me the seasons round !
How many days have slid across my mind
Since we had snow pitying the frozen ground !
Then winter sunshine cheered
The bitter skies ; the snow,
Reluctantly obeying lofty winds,
Drew off in shining clouds,
Wishing it still might love
With its white mercy the cold earth beneath.
But when the beautiful ground
Lights upward all the air,
Noon thaws the frozen eaves,
And makes the rime on post and paling steam
Silvery blue smoke in the golden day.
And soon from loaded trees in noiseless woods
The snows slip thudding down,
Scattering in their trail
Bright icy sparkles through the glittering air ;
And the fir-branches, patiently bent so long,
Sigh as they lift themselves to rights again.
Then warm moist hours steal in,
Such as can draw the year's
First fragrance from the sap of cherry wood
Or from the leaves of budless violets ;

And travellers in lanes
Catch the hot tawny smell
Reynard's damp fur left as he sneakt marauding
Across from gap to gap :
And in the larch woods on the highest boughs
The long-eared owls like grey cats sitting still
Peer down to quiz the passengers below.

Lascelles Abercrombie

Light has killed the winter and all dark dreams.
Now winds live all in light,
Light has come down to earth and blossoms here,
And we have golden minds.
From out the long shade of a road high-bankt,
I came on shelving fields ;
And from my feet cascading,
Streaming down the land,
Flickering lavish of daffodils flowed and fell ;
Like sunlight on a water thrill'd with haste,
Such clear pale quivering flame,
But a flame even more marvellously yellow.
And all the way to Ryton here I walkt
Ankle-deep in light.
It was as if the world had just begun ;
And in a mind new-made
Of shadowless delight
My spirit drank my flashing senses in,
And gloried to be made
Of young mortality.
No darker joy than this
Golden amazement now
Shall dare intrude into our dazzling lives :
Stain were it now to know
Mists of sweet warmth and deep delicious colour,
Those lovable accomplices that come
Befriending languid hours.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG

THE BUZZARDS

Martin Armstrong

When evening came and the warm glow grew deeper
And every tree that bordered the green meadows
And in the yellow cornfields every reaper
And every corn-shock stood above their shadows
Flung eastward from their feet in longer measure,
Serenely far there swam in the sunny height
A buzzard and his mate who took their pleasure
Swirling and poising idly in golden light.
On great pied motionless moth-wings borne along,
So effortless and so strong,
Cutting each other's paths, together they glided,
Then wheeled asunder till they soared divided
Two valleys' width (as though it were delight
To part like this, being sure they could unite
So swiftly in their empty, free dominion),
Curved headlong downward, towered up the sunny steep,
Then, with a sudden lift of the one great pinion,
Swung proudly to a curve and from its height
Took half a mile of sunlight in one long sweep.

And we, so small on the swift immense hillside,
Stood tranced, until our souls arose uplifted
On those far-sweeping, wide,
Strong curves of flight,— swayed up and hugely drifted,
Were washed, made strong and beautiful in the tide
Of sun-bathed air. But far beneath, beholden
Through shining deeps of air, the fields were golden
And rosy burned the heather where cornfields ended.

And still those buzzards wheeled, while light withdrew
Out of the vales and to surging slopes ascended,
Till the loftiest-flaming summit died to blue.

Martin Armstrong

HONEY HARVEST

Late in March, when the days are growing longer
And sight of early green
Tells of the coming spring and suns grow stronger,
Round the pale willow-catkins there are seen
The year's first honey-bees
Stealing the nectar : and bee-masters know
This for the first sign of the honey-flow.

Then in the dark hillsides the Cherry-trees
Gleam white with loads of blossom where the gleams
Of piled snow lately hung, and richer streams
The honey. Now, if chilly April days
Delay the Apple-blossom, and the May's
First week come in with sudden summer weather,
The Apple and the Hawthorn bloom together,
And all day long the plundering hordes go round
And every overweighted blossom nods.
But from that gathered essence they compound
Honey more sweet than nectar of the gods.

Those blossoms fall ere June, warm June that brings
The small white Clover. Field by scented field,
Round farms like islands in the rolling weald,
It spreads thick-flowering or in wildness springs
Short-stemmed upon the naked downs, to yield
A richer store of honey than the Rose,
The Pink, the Honeysuckle. Thence there flows
Nectar of clearest amber, redolent
Of every flowery scent
That the warm wind upgathers as he goes.

In mid-July be ready for the noise
Of million bees in old Lime-avenues,

As though hot noon had found a droning voice *Martin*
To ease her soul. Here for those busy crews *Arm-*
Green leaves and pale-stemmed clusters of green *strong*
flowers
Build heavy-perfumed, cool, green-twilight bowers
Whence, load by load, through the long summer days
They fill their glassy cells
With dark green honey, clear as chrysoprase,
Which housewives shun ; but the bee-master tells
This brand is more delicious than all else.

In August-time, if moors are near at hand,
Be wise and in the evening-twilight load
Your hives upon a cart, and take the road
By night : that, ere the early dawn shall spring
And all the hills turn rosy with the Ling,
Each waking hive may stand
Established in its new-appointed land
Without harm taken, and the earliest flights
Set out at once to loot the heathery heights.

That vintage of the Heather yields so dense
And glutinous a syrup that it foils
Him who would spare the comb and drain from thence
Its dark, full-flavoured spoils :
For he must squeeze to wreck the beautiful
Frail edifice. Not otherwise he sacks
Those many-chambered palaces of wax.

Then let a choice of every kind be made,
And, labelled, set upon your storehouse racks—
Of Hawthorn-honey that of almond smacks :
The luscious Lime-tree-honey, green as jade :
Pale Willow-honey, hived by the first rover :
That delicate honey culled

Martin Armstrong

From Apple-blossom, that of sunlight tastes :
And sunlight-coloured honey of the Clover.
  Then, when the late year wastes,
When night falls early and the noon is dulled
  And the last warm days are over,
Unlock the store and to your table bring
Essence of every blossom of the spring.
And if, when wind has never ceased to blow
All night, you wake to roofs and trees becalmed
  In level wastes of snow,
Bring out the Lime-tree-honey, the embalmed
Soul of a lost July, or Heather-spiced
Brown-gleaming comb wherein sleeps crystallised
All the hot perfume of the heathery slope.
And, tasting and remembering, live in hope.

MISS THOMPSON GOES SHOPPING

Martin Armstrong

Miss Thompson at Home.

In her lone cottage on the downs,
With winds and blizzards and great crowns
Of shining cloud, with wheeling plover
And short grass sweet with the small white clover,
Miss Thompson lived, correct and meek,
A lonely spinster, and every week
On market-day she used to go
Into the little town below,
Tucked in the great downs' hollow bowl
Like pebbles gathered in a shoal.

She goes a-Marketing.

So, having washed her plates and cup
And banked the kitchen-fire up,
Miss Thompson slipped upstairs and dressed,
Put on her black (her second best),
The bonnet trimmed with rusty plush,
Peeped in the glass with simpering blush,
From camphor-smelling cupboard took
Her thicker jacket off the hook
Because the day might turn to cold.
Then, ready, slipped downstairs and rolled
The hearthrug back; then searched about,
Found her basket, ventured out,
Snecked the door and paused to lock it
And plunge the key in some deep pocket.
Then as she tripped demurely down
The steep descent, the little town
Spread wider till its sprawling street
Enclosed her and her footfalls beat
On hard stone pavement, and she felt
Those throbbing ecstasies that melt
Through heart and mind, as, happy, free,
Her small, prim personality

Martin Armstrong

Merged into the seething strife
Of auction-marts and city life.

She visits the Boot-maker.

Serenely down the busy stream
Miss Thompson floated in a dream.
Now, hovering bee-like, she would stop
Entranced before some tempting shop,
Getting in people's way and prying
At things she never thought of buying:
Now wafted on without an aim,
Until in course of time she came
To Watson's bootshop. Long she pries
At boots and shoes of every size—
Brown football-boots with bar and stud
For boys that scuffle in the mud,
And dancing-pumps with pointed toes
Glossy as jet, and dull black bows;
Slim ladies' shoes with two-inch heel
And sprinkled beads of gold and steel—
'How anyone can wear such things!'
On either side the doorway springs
(As in a tropic jungle loom
Masses of strange thick-petalled bloom
And fruits mis-shapen) fold on fold
A growth of sand-shoes rubber-soled,
Clambering the door-posts, branching, spawning
Their barbarous bunches like an awning
Over the windows and the doors.
But, framed among the other stores,
Something has caught Miss Thompson's eye
(O worldliness! O vanity!),
A pair of slippers—scarlet plush.
Miss Thompson feels a conscious blush
Suffuse her face, as though her thought
Had ventured further than it ought.

But O that colour's rapturous singing
And the answer in her lone heart ringing!
She turns (O Guardian Angels, stop her
From doing anything improper!)
She turns; and see, she stoops and bungles
In through the sand-shoes' hanging jungles,
Away from light and common sense,
Into the shop dim-lit and dense
With smells of polish and tanned hide.

Martin Armstrong

Soon from a dark recess inside
Fat Mrs. Watson comes slip-slop
To mind the business of the shop.
She walks flat-footed with a roll—
A serviceable, homely soul,
With kindly, ugly face like dough,
Hair dull and colourless as tow.
A huge Scotch pebble fills the space
Between her bosom and her face.
One sees her making beds all day.
Miss Thompson lets her say her say:
'So chilly for the time of year.
It's ages since we saw you here.'
Then, heart a-flutter, speech precise,
Describes the shoes and asks the price.
'Them, Miss? Ah, them is six-and-nine.'
Miss Thompson shudders down the spine
(Dream of impossible romance).
She eyes them with a wistful glance,
Torn between good and evil. Yes,
For half-a-minute and no less
Miss Thompson strives with seven devils,
Then, soaring over earthly levels,
Turns from the shoes with lingering touch—

Mrs. Watson.

Wrestles with a Temptation;

And is Saved.

Martin Armstrong

'Ah, six-and-nine is far too much.
Sorry to trouble you. Good day!'

She visits the Fishmonger,

A little further down the way
Stands Miles's fish-shop, whence is shed
So strong a smell of fishes dead
That people of a subtler sense
Hold their breath and hurry thence.
Miss Thompson hovers there and gazes:
Her housewife's knowing eye appraises
Salt and fresh, severely cons
Kippers bright as tarnished bronze:
Great cods disposed upon the sill,
Chilly and wet, with gaping gill,
Flat head, glazed eye, and mute, uncouth,
Shapeless, wan, old-woman's mouth.
Next a row of soles and plaice
With querulous and twisted face,
And red-eyed bloaters, golden-grey;
Smoked haddocks ranked in neat array;
A group of smelts that take the light
Like slips of rainbow, pearly bright;
Silver trout with rosy spots,
And coral shrimps with keen black dots
For eyes, and hard and jointed sheath
And crisp tails curving underneath.
But there upon the sanded floor,
More wonderful in all that store
Than anything on slab or shelf,
Stood Miles, the fishmonger, himself.

Mr. Miles.

Four-square he stood and filled the place.
His huge hands and his jolly face
Were red. He had a mouth to quaff
Pint after pint: a sounding laugh,

Martin Armstrong

But wheezy at the end, and oft
His eyes bulged outwards and he coughed.
Aproned he stood from chin to toe.
The apron's vertical long flow
Warped grandly outwards to display
His hale, round belly hung midway,
Whose apex was securely bound
With apron-strings wrapped round and round.
Outside, Miss Thompson, small and staid,
Felt, as she always felt, afraid
Of this huge man who laughed so loud
And drew the notice of the crowd.
Awhile she paused in timid thought,
Then promptly hurried in and bought
'Two kippers, please. Yes, lovely weather.'
'Two kippers? Sixpence altogether:'
And in her basket laid the pair
Wrapped face to face in newspaper.

Relapses into Temptation:

Then on she went, as one half blind,
For things were stirring in her mind;
Then turned about with fixed intent
And, heading for the bootshop, went
Straight in and bought the scarlet slippers
And popped them in beside the kippers.

And Falls.

She visits the Chemist,

So much for that. From there she tacked,
Still flushed by this decisive act,
Westward, and came without a stop
To Mr. Wren the chemist's shop,
And stood awhile outside to see
The tall, big-bellied bottles three—
Red, blue, and emerald, richly bright
Each with its burning core of light.
The bell chimed as she pushed the door.
Spotless the oilcloth on the floor,

Martin Armstrong

Limpid as water each glass case,
Each thing precisely in its place.
Rows of small drawers, black-lettered each
With curious words of foreign speech,
Ranked high above the other ware.
The old strange fragrance filled the air,
A fragrance like the garden pink,
But tinged with vague medicinal stink
Of camphor, soap, new sponges, blent
With chloroform and violet scent.

Mr. Wren.

And Wren the chemist, tall and spare,
Stood gaunt behind his counter there.
Quiet and very wise he seemed,
With skull-like face, bald head that gleamed ;
Through spectacles his eyes looked kind.
He wore a pencil tucked behind
His ear. And never he mistakes
The wildest signs the doctor makes
Prescribing drugs. Brown paper, string,
He will not use for any thing,
But all in neat white parcels packs
And sticks them up with sealing-wax.
Miss Thompson bowed and blushed, and then
Undoubting bought of Mr. Wren,
Being free from modern scepticism,
A bottle for her rheumatism ;
Also some peppermints to take
In case of wind ; an oval cake
Of scented soap ; a penny square
Of pungent naphthaline to scare
The moth. And after Wren had wrapped
And sealed the lot, Miss Thompson clapped
Them in beside the fish and shoes ;
'Good day,' she says, and off she goes.

Martin Armstrong

Beelike Miss Thompson, whither next ?
Outside, you pause awhile, perplext,
Your bearings lost. Then all comes back
And round she wheels, hot on the track
Of Giles the grocer, and from there
To Emilie the milliner,
There to be tempted by the sight
Of hats and blouses fiercely bright.
(O guard Miss Thompson, Powers that Be,
From Crudeness and Vulgarity.)

Is Led away to the Pleasures of the Town,

Such as Groceries and Millinery,

Still on from shop to shop she goes
With sharp bird's-eye, enquiring nose,
Prying and peering, entering some,
Oblivious of the thought of home.
The town brimmed up with deep-blue haze,
But still she stayed to flit and gaze,
Her eyes ablur with rapturous sights,
Her small soul full of small delights,
Empty her purse, her basket filled.
The traffic in the town was stilled.
The clock struck six. Men thronged the inns.
Dear, dear, she should be home long since.

And other Allurements

But at length is Convinced of Indiscretion.

Then as she climbed the misty downs
The lamps were lighted in the town's
Small streets. She saw them star by star
Multiplying from afar ;
Till, mapped beneath her, she could trace
Each street, and the wide square market-place
Sunk deeper and deeper as she went
Higher up the steep ascent.
And all that soul-uplifting stir
Step by step fell back from her,
The glory gone, the blossoming

And Returns Home.

Martin Armstrong

Shrivelled, and she, a small, frail thing,
Carrying her laden basket. Till
Darkness and silence of the hill
Received her in their restful care
And stars came dropping through the air.

But loudly, sweetly sang the slippers
In the basket with the kippers;
And loud and sweet the answering thrills
From her lone heart on the hills.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

THE POOR MAN'S PIG

Edmund Blunden

Already fallen plum-bloom stars the green
  And apple-boughs as knarred as old toads' backs
Wear their small roses ere a rose is seen ;
  The building thrush watches old Job who stacks
The bright-peeled osiers on the sunny fence,
  The pent sow grunts to hear him stumping by,
And tries to push the bolt and scamper thence,
  But her ringed snout still keeps her to the sty.

Then out he lets her run ; away she snorts
  In bundling gallop for the cottage door,
With hungry hubbub begging crusts and orts,
  Then like the whirlwind bumping round once more ;
Nuzzling the dog, making the pullets run,
And sulky as a child when her play's done.

Edmund Blunden

ALMSWOMEN

At Quincey's moat the squandering village ends,
And there in the almshouse dwell the dearest friends
Of all the village, two old dames that cling
As close as any trueloves in the spring.
Long, long ago they passed threescore-and-ten,
And in this doll's house lived together then ;
All things they have in common, being so poor,
And their one fear, Death's shadow at the door.
Each sundown makes them mournful, each sunrise
Brings back the brightness in their failing eyes.

How happy go the rich fair-weather days
When on the roadside folk stare in amaze
At such a honeycomb of fruit and flowers
As mellows round their threshold ; what long hours
They gloat upon their steepling hollyhocks,
Bee's balsams, feathery southernwood, and stocks,
Fiery dragon's-mouths, great mallow leaves
For salves, and lemon-plants in bushy sheaves,
Shagged Esau's-hands with five green finger-tips.
Such old sweet names are ever on their lips.
As pleased as little children where these grow
In cobbled pattens and worn gowns they go,
Proud of their wisdom when on gooseberry shoots
They stuck eggshells to fright from coming fruits
The brisk-billed rascals ; pausing still to see
Their neighbour owls saunter from tree to tree,
Or in the hushing half-light mouse the lane
Long-winged and lordly.
But when those hours wane,
Indoors they ponder, scared by the harsh storm
Whose pelting saracens on the window swarm,
And listen for the mail to clatter past

And church clock's deep bay withering on the blast ; *Edmund*
They feed the fire that flings a freakish light *Blunden*
On pictured kings and queens grotesquely bright,
Platters and pitchers, faded calendars
And graceful hour-glass trim with lavenders.

Many a time they kiss and cry, and pray
That both be summoned in the self-same day,
And wiseman linnet tinkling in his cage
End too with them the friendship of old age,
And all together leave their treasured room
Some bell-like evening when the may's in bloom.

Edmund Blunden

PERCH-FISHING

On the far hill the cloud of thunder grew
And sunlight blurred below ; but sultry blue
Burned yet on the valley water where it hoards
Behind the miller's elmen floodgate boards,
And there the wasps, that lodge them ill-concealed
In the vole's empty house, still drove afield
To plunder touchwood from old crippled trees
And build their young ones their hutched nurseries ;
Still creaked the grasshoppers' rasping unison
Nor had the whisper through the tansies run
Nor weather-wisest bird gone home.
How then
Should wry eels in the pebbled shallows ken
Lightning coming ? troubled up they stole
To the deep-shadowed sullen water-hole,
Among whose warty snags the quaint perch lair.
As cunning stole the boy to angle there,
Muffling least tread, with no noise balancing through
The hangdog alder-boughs his bright bamboo.
Down plumbed the shuttled ledger, and the quill
On the quicksilver water lay dead still.

A sharp snatch, swirling to-fro of the line,
He's lost, he's won, with splash and scuffling shine
Past the low-lapping brandy-flowers drawn in,
The ogling hunchback perch with needled fin.
And there beside him one as large as he,
Following his hooked mate, careless who shall see
Or what befall him, close and closer yet—
The startled boy might take him in his net
That folds the other.
Slow, while on the clay
The other flounces, slow he sinks away.

What agony usurps that watery brain
For comradeship of twenty summers slain,
For such delights below the flashing weir
And up the sluice-cut, playing buccaneer
Among the minnows ; lolling in hot sun
When bathing vagabonds had drest and done ;
Rootling in salty flannel-weed for meal
And river shrimps, when hushed the trundling wheel ;
Snapping the dapping moth, and with new wonder
Prowling through old drowned barges falling asunder.
And O a thousand things the whole year through
They did together, never more to do.

Edmund Blunden

Edmund Blunden

THE GIANT PUFFBALL

From what sad star I know not, but I found
Myself new-born below the coppice rail,
No bigger than the dewdrops and as round,
In a soft sward, no cattle might assail.

And so I gathered mightiness and grew
With this one dream kindling in me, that I
Should never cease from conquering light and dew
Till my white splendour touched the trembling sky.

A century of blue and stilly light
Bowed down before me, the dew came again,
The moon my sibyl worshipped through the night,
The sun returned and long abode ; but then

Hoarse drooping darkness hung me with a shroud
And switched at me with shrivelled leaves in scorn.
Red morning stole beneath a grinning cloud,
And suddenly clambering over dike and thorn

A half-moon host of churls with flags and sticks
Hallooed and hurtled up the partridge brood,
And Death clapped hands from all the echoing thicks,
And trampling envy spied me where I stood ;

Who haled me tired and quaking, hid me by,
And came again after an age of cold,
And hung me in the prison-house adry
From the great crossbeam. Here defiled and old

I perish through unnumbered hours, I swoon,
Hacked with harsh knives to staunch a child's torn hand ;
And all my hopes must with my body soon
Be but as crouching dust and wind-blown sand.

THE CHILD'S GRAVE

Edmund Blunden

I came to the churchyard where pretty Joy lies
On a morning in April, a rare sunny day ;
Such bloom rose around, and so many birds' cries
That I sang for delight as I followed the way.

I sang for delight in the ripening of spring,
For dandelions even were suns come to earth ;
Not a moment went by but a new lark took wing
To wait on the season with melody's mirth.

Love-making birds were my mates all the road,
And who would wish surer delight for the eye
Than to see pairing goldfinches gleaming abroad
Or yellowhammers sunning on paling and sty ?

And stocks in the almswomen's garden were blown,
With rich Easter roses each side of the door ;
The lazy white owls in the glade cool and lone
Paid calls on their cousins in the elm's chambered core.

This peace, then, and happiness thronged me around.
Nor could I go burdened with grief, but made merry
Till I came to the gate of that overgrown ground
Where scarce once a year sees the priest come to bury.

Over the mounds stood the nettles in pride,
And, where no fine flowers, there kind weeds dared to wave ;
It seemed but as yesterday she lay by my side,
And now my dog ate of the grass on her grave.

Edmund Blunden

He licked my hand wondering to see me muse so,
And wished I would lead on the journey or home,
As though not a moment of spring were to go
In brooding; but I stood, if her spirit might come

And tell me her life, since we left her that day
In the white lilied coffin, and rained down our tears;
But the grave held no answer, though long I should stay;
How strange that this clay should mingle with hers!

So I called my good dog, and went on my way;
Joy's spirit shone then in each flower I went by,
And clear as the noon, in coppice and ley,
Her sweet dawning smile and her violet eye!

APRIL BYEWAY

Edmund Blunden

Friend whom I never saw, yet dearest friend,
Be with me travelling on the byeway now
In April's month and mood : our steps shall bend
By the shut smithy with its penthouse brow
Armed round with many a felly and crackt plough :
And we will mark in his white smock the mill
Standing aloof, long numbed to any wind,
That in his crannies mourns, and craves him still ;
But now there is not any grain to grind,
And even the master lies too deep for winds to find.

Grieve not at these : for there are mills amain
With lusty sails that leap and drop away
On further knolls, and lads to fetch the grain.
The ash-spit wickets on the green betray
New games begun and old ones put away.
Let us fare on, dead friend, O deathless friend,
Where under his old hat as green as moss
The hedger chops and finds new gaps to mend,
And on his bonfires burns the thorns and dross,
And hums a hymn, the best, thinks he, that ever was.

There the grey guinea-fowl stands in the way,
The young black heifer and the raw-ribbed mare,
And scorn to move for tumbril or for dray,
And feel themselves as good as farmers there.
From the young corn the prick-eared leverets stare
At strangers come to spy the land—small sirs,
We bring less danger than the very breeze
Who in great zig-zag blows the bee, and whirs
In bluebell shadow down the bright green leas ;
From whom in frolic fit the chopt straw darts and flees.

Edmund Blunden

The cornel steepling up in white shall know
The two friends passing by, and poplar smile
All gold within ; the church-top fowl shall glow
To lure us on, and we shall rest awhile
Where the wild apple blooms above the stile ;
The yellow frog beneath blinks up half bold,
Then scares himself into the deeper green.
And thus spring was for you in days of old,
And thus will be when I too walk unseen
By one that thinks me friend, the best that there has been.

All our lone journey laughs for joy, the hours
Like honey-bees go home in new-found light
Past the cow pond amazed with twinkling flowers
And antique chalk-pit newly delved to white,
Or idle snow-plough nearly hid from sight.
The blackbird sings us home, on a sudden peers
The round tower hung with ivy's blackened chains,
Then past the little green the byeway veers,
The mill-sweeps torn, the forge with cobwebbed panes
That have so many years looked out across the plains.

But the old forge and mill are shut and done,
The tower is crumbling down, stone by stone falls ;
An ague doubt comes creeping in the sun,
The sun himself shudders, the day appals,
The concourse of a thousand tempests sprawls
Over the blue-lipped lakes and maddening groves,
Like agonies of gods the clouds are whirled,
The stormwind like the demon huntsman roves—
Still stands my friend, though all's to chaos hurled,
The unseen friend, the one last friend in all the world.

WILLIAM H. DAVIES

THE CAPTIVE LION

William H. Davies

Thou that in fury with thy knotted tail
Hast made this iron floor thy beaten drum ;
That now in silence walkst thy little space—
Like a sea-captain—careless what may come :

What power has brought thy majesty to this,
Who gave those eyes their dull and sleepy look ;
Who took their lightning out, and from thy throat
The thunder when the whole wide forest shook ?

It was that man who went again, alone,
Into thy forest dark—Lord, he was brave !
That man a fly has killed, whose bones are left
Unburied till an earthquake digs his grave.

William H. Davies

A BIRD'S ANGER

A summer's morning that has but one voice ;
Five hundred stooks, like golden lovers, lean
Their heads together, in their quiet way,
And but one bird sings, of a number seen.

It is the lark, that louder, louder sings,
As though but this one thought possessed his mind :
' You silent robin, blackbird, thrush, and finch,
I'll sing enough for all you lazy kind ! '

And when I hear him at this daring task,
' Peace, little bird,' I say, ' and take some rest ;
Stop that wild, screaming fire of angry song,
Before it makes a coffin of your nest.'

THE VILLAIN

William H. Davies

While joy gave clouds the light of stars,
  That beamed where'er they looked ;
And calves and lambs had tottering knees,
  Excited, while they sucked ;
While every bird enjoyed his song,
Without one thought of harm or wrong—
I turned my head and saw the wind,
  Not far from where I stood,
Dragging the corn by her golden hair,
  Into a dark and lonely wood.

William H. Davies

LOVE'S CAUTION

Tell them, when you are home again,
  How warm the air was now ;
How silent were the birds and leaves,
  And of the moon's full glow ;
    And how we saw afar
    A falling star :
It was a tear of pure delight
Ran down the face of Heaven this happy night.

Our kisses are but love in flower,
  Until that greater time
When, gathering strength, those flowers take wing,
  And Love can reach his prime.
    And now, my heart's delight,
    Good night, good night ;
Give me the last sweet kiss—
But do not breathe at home one word of this !

WASTED HOURS

William H. Davies

How many buds in this warm light
  Have burst out laughing into leaves!
And shall a day like this be gone
  Before I seek the wood that holds
The richest music known?

Too many times have nightingales
  Wasted their passion on my sleep,
And brought repentance soon:
  But this one night I'll seek the woods,
The nightingale, and moon.

William H. Davies

THE TRUTH

Since I have seen a bird one day,
His head pecked more than half away ;
That hopped about, with but one eye,
Ready to fight again, and die—
Ofttimes since then their private lives
Have spoilt that joy their music gives.

So when I see this robin now,
Like a red apple on the bough,
And question why he sings so strong,
For love, or for the love of song ;
Or sings, maybe, for that sweet rill
Whose silver tongue is never still—

Ah, now there comes this thought unkind,
Born of the knowledge in my mind :
He sings in triumph that last night
He killed his father in a fight ;
And now he'll take his mother's blood—
The last strong rival for his food.

WALTER DE LA MARE

THE MOTH

Walter de la Mare

Isled in the midnight air,
Musked with the dark's faint bloom,
Out into glooming and secret haunts
The flame cries, 'Come!'

Lovely in dye and fan,
A-tremble in shimmering grace,
A moth from her winter swoon
Uplifts her face:

Stares from her glamorous eyes;
Wafts her on plumes like mist;
In ecstasy swirls and sways
To her strange tryst.

SOTTO VOCE

(To Edward Thomas)

The haze of noon wanned silver-grey,
The soundless mansion of the sun ;
The air made visible in his ray,
Like molten glass from furnace run,
Quivered o'er heat-baked turf and stone
And the flower of the gorse burned on—
Burned softly as gold of a child's fair hair
Along each spiky spray, and shed
Almond-like incense in the air
Whereon our senses fed.

At foot—a few sparse harebells : blue
And still as were the friend's dark eyes
That dwelt on mine, transfixèd through
With sudden ecstatic surmise.

' Hst ! ' he cried softly, smiling, and lo,
Stealing amidst that maze gold-green,
I heard a whispering music flow
From guileful throat of bird, unseen :—
So delicate, the straining ear
Scarce carried its faint syllabling
Into a heart caught-up to hear
That inmost pondering
Of bird-like self with self. We stood,
In happy trance-like solitude,
Hearkening a lullay grieved and sweet—
As when on isle uncharted beat
'Gainst coral at the palm-tree's root,
With brine-clear, snow-white foam afloat,

The wailing, not of water or wind—
A husht, far, wild, divine lament,
When Prospero his wizardry bent
Winged Ariel to bind. . . .

Walter de la Mare

Then silence, and o'er-flooding noon.
I raised my head ; smiled too. And he—
Moved his great hand, the magic gone—
Gently amused to see
My ignorant wonderment. He sighed.
'It was a nightingale,' he said,
'That *sotto voce* cons the song
He'll sing when dark is spread ;
And Night's vague hours are sweet and long,
And we are laid abed.'

SEPHINA

Black lacqueys at the wide-flung door
  Stand mute as men of wood.
Gleams like a pool the ballroom floor—
    A burnished solitude.
  A hundred waxen tapers shine
  From silver sconces ; softly pine
  'Cello, fiddle, mandoline,
    To music deftly wooed—
And dancers in cambric, satin, silk,
With glancing hair and cheeks like milk,
    Wreathe, curtsey, intertwine.

The drowse of roses lulls the air
Wafted up the marble stair.
Like warbling water clucks the talk.
From room to room in splendour walk
Guests, smiling in the aery sheen ;
Carmine and azure, white and green,
They stoop and languish, pace and preen
    Bare shoulder, painted fan,
Gemmed wrist and finger, neck of swan ;
And still the pluckt strings warble on ;
Still from the snow-bowered, link-lit street
The muffled hooves of horses beat ;
And harness rings ; and foam-fleckt bit
Clanks as the slim heads toss and stare
From deep, dark eyes. Smiling, at ease,
Mount to the porch the pomped grandees
In lonely state, by twos, and threes,
Exchanging languid courtesies,
    While torches fume and flare.

Walter de la Mare

And now the banquet calls. A blare
Of squalling trumpets clots the air.
And, flocking out, streams up the rout ;
And lilies nod to velvet's swish ;
And peacocks prim on gilded dish,
Vast pies thick-glazed, and gaping fish,
Towering confections crisp as ice,
Jellies aglare like cockatrice,
With thousand savours tongues entice.
Fruits of all hues barbaric gloom—
Pomegranate, quince and peach and plum,
Mandarine, grape, and cherry clear
Englobe each glassy chandelier,
Where nectarous flowers their sweets distil—
Jessamine, tuberose, chamomill,
Wild-eye narcissus, anemone,
Tendril of ivy and vinery.

Now odorous wines the goblets fill ;
Gold-cradled meats the menials bear
From gilded chair to gilded chair :
Now roars the talk like crashing seas,
Foams upward to the painted frieze,
Echoes and ebbs. Still surges in,
To yelp of hautboy and violin,
Plumed and bedazzling, rosed and rare,
Dance-bemused, with cheek aglow,
Stooping the green-twined portal through,
Sighing with laughter, debonair,
That concourse of the proud and fair—
And lo ! 'La, la !
Mamma . . . Mamma !'
Falls a small cry in the dark and calls—
'I see you standing there !'

Walter de la Mare

Fie, fie, Sephina ! not in bed !
Crouched on the staircase overhead,
Like ghost she gloats, her lean hand laid
On alabaster balustrade,
  And gazes on and on
Down on that wondrous to and fro
Till finger and foot are cold as snow,
  And half the night is gone ;
And dazzled eyes are sore bestead ;
Nods drowsily the sleek-locked head ;
And, vague and far, spins, fading out,
That rainbow-coloured, reeling rout,
And, with faint sighs, her spirit flies
    Into deep sleep. . . .

    Come, Stranger, peep !
    Was ever cheek so wan ?

TITMOUSE

Walter de la Mare

If you would happy company win,
Dangle a palm-nut from a tree,
Idly in green to sway and spin,
Its snow-pulped kernel for bait ; and see,
A nimble titmouse enter in.

Out of earth's vast unknown of air,
Out of all summer, from wave to wave,
He'll perch, and prank his feathers fair,
Jangle a glass-clear wildering stave,
And take his commons there—

This tiny son of life ; this spright,
By momentary Human sought,
Plume will his wing in the dappling light,
Clash timbrel shrill and gay—
And into time's enormous nought,
Sweet-fed, will flit away.

SUPPOSE

Suppose . . . and suppose that a wild little Horse of Magic
Came cantering out of the sky,
With bridle of silver, and into the saddle I mounted,
To fly—and to fly;

And we stretched up into the air, fleeting on in the sunshine,
A speck in the gleam,
On galloping hoofs, his mane in the wind out-flowing,
In a shadowy stream;

And oh, when, all lone, the gentle star of evening
Came crinkling into the blue,
A magical castle we saw in the air, like a cloud of moonlight,
As onward we flew;

And across the green moat on the drawbridge we foamed and we snorted,
And there was a beautiful Queen
Who smiled at me strangely; and spoke to my wild little Horse, too—
A lovely and beautiful Queen;

And she cried with delight—and delight—to her delicate maidens,
'Behold my daughter—my dear!'
And they crowned me with flowers, and then to their harps sate playing,
Solemn and clear;

And magical cakes and goblets were spread on the table;
And at window the birds came in;
Hopping along with bright eyes, pecking crumbs from the platters,
And sipped of the wine;

And splashing up—up to the roof tossed fountains of crystal;
And Princes in scarlet and green
Shot with their bows and arrows, and kneeled with their dishes
Of fruits for the Queen;

And we walked in a magical garden with rivers and bowers,
And my bed was of ivory and gold;
And the Queen breathed soft in my ear a song of enchantment—
And I never grew old. . . .

And I never, never came back to the earth, oh, never and never;
How mother would cry and cry!
There'd be snow on the fields then, and all these sweet flowers in the winter
Would wither, and die. . . .

Suppose . . . and suppose . . .

Walter de la Mare

THE CORNER STONE

Sterile these stones
By time in ruin laid.
Yet many a creeping thing
Its haven has made
In these least crannies, where falls
Dark's dew, and noonday shade.

The claw of the tender bird
Finds lodgment here ;
Dye-winged butterflies poise ;
Emmet and beetle steer
Their busy course ; the bee
Drones, laden, near.

Their myriad-mirrored eyes
Great day reflect.
By their exquisite farings
Is this granite specked ;
Is trodden to infinite dust ;
By gnawing lichens decked.

Toward what eventual dream
Sleeps its cold on,
When into ultimate dark
These lives shall be gone,
And even of man not a shadow remain
Of all he has done ?

JOHN DRINKWATER

Then I asked : ' Does a firm persuasion that a thing is so, make it so ? '

He replied : ' All Poets believe that it does, and in ages of imagination this firm persuasion removed mountains ; but many are not capable of a firm persuasion of anything.'

Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell.*

PERSUASION

John Drinkwater

I.

At any moment love unheralded
Comes, and is king. Then as, with a fall
Of frost, the buds upon the hawthorn spread
Are withered in untimely burial,
So love, occasion gone, his crown puts by,
And as a beggar walks unfriended ways,
With but remembered beauty to defy
The frozen sorrows of unsceptred days.
Or in that later travelling he comes
Upon a bleak oblivion, and tells
Himself, again, again, forgotten tombs
Are all now that love was, and blindly spells
His royal state of old a glory cursed,
Saying ' I have forgot ', and that's the worst.

II.

If we should part upon that one embrace,
And set our courses ever, each from each,
With all our treasure but a fading face
And little ghostly syllables of speech ;
Should beauty's moment never be renewed,
And moons on moons look out for us in vain,
And each but whisper from a solitude
To hear but echoes of a lonely pain,—
Still in a world that fortune cannot change
Should walk those two that once were you and I,
Those two that once when moon and stars were strange
Poets above us in an April sky,
Heard a voice falling on the midnight sea,
Mute, and for ever, but for you and me.

III.

This nature, this great flood of life, this cheat
That uses us as baubles for her coat,
Takes love, that should be nothing but the beat
Of blood for its own beauty, by the throat,
Saying, you are my servant and shall do
My purposes, or utter bitterness
Shall be your wage, and nothing come to you
But stammering tongues that never can confess.
Undaunted then in answer here I cry,
'You wanton, that control the hand of him
Who masquerades as wisdom in a sky
Where holy, holy, sing the cherubim,
I will not pay one penny to your name
Though all my body crumble into shame.'

IV.

Woman, I once had whimpered at your hand,
Saying that all the wisdom that I sought
Lay in your brain, that you were as the sand
Should cleanse the muddy mirrors of my thought;
I should have read in you the character
Of oracles that quick a thousand lays,
Looked in your eyes, and seen accounted there
Solomons legioned for bewildered praise.
Now have I learnt love as love is. I take
Your hand, and with no inquisition learn
All that your eyes can tell, and that's to make
A little reckoning and brief, then turn
Away, and in my heart I hear a call,
'I love, I love, I love'; and that is all.

V.

John Drinkwater

When all the hungry pain of love I bear,
And in poor lightless thought but burn and burn,
And wit goes hunting wisdom everywhere,
Yet can no word of revelation learn ;
When endlessly the scales of yea and nay
In dreadful motion fall and rise and fall,
When all my heart in sorrow I could pay
Until at last were left no tear at all ;
Then if with tame or subtle argument
Companions come and draw me to a place
Where words are but the tappings of content,
And life spreads all her garments with a grace,
I curse that ease, and hunger in my heart
Back to my pain and lonely to depart.

VI.

Not anything you do can make you mine,
For enterprise with equal charity
In duty as in love elect will shine,
The constant slave of mutability.
Nor can your words for all their honey breath
Outsing the speech of many an older rhyme,
And though my ear deliver them from death
One day or two, it is so little time.
Nor does your beauty in its excellence
Excel a thousand in the daily sun,
Yet must I put a period to pretence,
And with my logic's catalogue have done,
For act and word and beauty are but keys
To unlock the heart, and you, dear love, are these.

John Drinkwater

VII.

Never the heart of spring had trembled so
As on that day when first in Paradise
We went afoot as novices to know
For the first time what blue was in the skies,
What fresher green than any in the grass,
And how the sap goes beating to the sun,
And tell how on the clocks of beauty pass
Minute by minute till the last is done.
But not the new birds singing in the brake,
And not the buds of our discovery,
The deeper blue, the wilder green, the ache
For beauty that we shadow as we see,
Made heaven, but we, as love's occasion brings,
Took these, and made them Paradisal things.

VIII.

The lilacs offer beauty to the sun,
Throbbing with wonder as eternally
For sad and happy lovers they have done
With the first bloom of summer in the sky;
Yet they are newly spread in honour now,
Because, for every beam of beauty given
Out of that clustering heart, back to the bough
My love goes beating, from a greater heaven.
So be my love for good or sorry luck
Bound, it has virtue on this April eve
That shall be there for ever when they pluck
Lilacs for love. And though I come to grieve
Long at a frosty tomb, there still shall be
My happy lyric in the lilac tree.

IX.

John Drinkwater

When they make silly question of my love,
And speak to me of danger and disdain,
And look by fond old argument to move
My wisdom to docility again ;
When to my prouder heart they set the pride
Of custom and the gossip of the street,
And show me figures of myself beside
A self diminished at their judgment seat ;
Then do I sit as in a drowsy pew
To hear a priest expounding th' heavenly will,
Defiling wonder that he never knew
With stolen words of measured good and ill ;
For to the love that knows their counselling,
Out of my love contempt alone I bring.

X.

Not love of you is most that I can bring,
Since what I am to love you is the test,
And should I love you more than any thing
You would but be of idle love possessed,
A mere love wandering in appetite,
Counting your glories and yet bringing none,
Finding in you occasions of delight,
A thief of payment for no service done.
But when of labouring life I make a song
And bring it you, as that were my reward,
To let what most is me to you belong,
Then do I come of high possessions lord,
And loving life more than my love of you
I give you love more excellently true.

John Drinkwater

XI.

What better tale could any lover tell
When age or death his reckoning shall write
Than thus, ‘ Love taught me only to rebel
Against these things,—the thieving of delight
Without return ; the gospellers of fear
Who, loving, yet deny the truth they bear,
Sad-suited lusts with lecherous hands to smear
The cloth of gold they would but dare not wear.
And love gave me great knowledge of the trees,
And singing birds, and earth with all her flowers ;
Wisdom I knew and righteousness in these,
I lived in their atonement all my hours ;
Love taught me how to beauty’s eye alone
The secret of the lying heart is known.’

XII.

This then at last ; we may be wiser far
Than love, and put his folly to our measure,
Yet shall we learn, poor wizards that we are,
That love chimes not nor motions at our pleasure.
We bid him come, and light an eager fire,
And he goes down the road without debating ;
We cast him from the house of our desire,
And when at last we leave he will be waiting.
And in the end there is no folly but this,
To counsel love out of our little learning.
For still he knows where rotten timber is,
And where the boughs for the long winter burning ;
And when life needs no more of us at all,
Love’s word will be the last that we recall.

JOHN FREEMAN

I WILL ASK

John Freeman

I will ask primrose and violet to spend for you
Their smell and hue,
And the bold, trembling anemone awhile to spare
Her flowers starry fair ;
Or the flushed wild apple and yet sweeter thorn
Their sweetness to keep
Longer than any fire-bosomed flower born
Between midnight and midnight deep.

And I will take celandine, nettle and parsley, white
In its own green light,
Or milkwort and sorrel, thyme, harebell and meadow-sweet
Lifting at your feet,
And ivy-blossom beloved of soft bees ; I will take
The loveliest—
The seeding grasses that bend with the winds, and shake
Though the winds are at rest.

'For me?' you will ask. 'Yes! surely they wave for you
Their smell and hue,
And you away all that is rare were so much less
By your missed happiness.'
Yet I know grass and weed, ivy and apple and thorn
Their whole sweet would keep,
Though in Eden no human spirit on a shining morn
Had awaked from sleep.

John Freeman

THE EVENING SKY

Rose-bosom'd and rose-limb'd
With eyes of dazzling bright
Shakes Venus mid the twined boughs of the night;
Rose-limb'd, soft-stepping
From low bough to bough,
Shaking the wide-hung starry fruitage—dimmed
Its bloom of snow
By that sole planetary glow.

Venus, avers the astronomer,
Not thus idly dancing goes
Flushing the eternal orchard with wild rose.
She through ether burns
Outpacing planetary earth,
And ere two years triumphantly returns,
And again wave-like swelling flows,
And again her flashing apparition comes and goes.

This we have not seen,
No heavenly courses set,
No flight unpausing through a void serene:
But when eve clears,
Arises Venus as she first uprose
Stepping the shaken boughs among,
And in her bosom glows
The warm light hidden in sunny snows.

She shakes the clustered stars
Lightly, as she goes
Amid the unseen branches of the night,
Rose-limb'd, rose-bosom'd bright.

She leaps : they shake and pale ; she glows—
And who but knows
How the rejoiced heart aches
When Venus all his starry vision shakes ;

John Freeman

When through his mind
Tossing with random airs of an unearthly wind,
Rose-bosom'd, rose-limb'd,
The mistress of his starry vision arises,
And the boughs glittering sway
And the stars pale away,
And the enlarging heaven glows
As Venus light-foot mid the twinèd branches goes.

John Freeman

THE CAVES

Like the tide—knocking at the hollowed cliff
And running into each green cave as if
In the cave's night to keep
Eternal motion grave and deep—

That, even while each broken wave repeats
Its answered knocking and with bruised hand beats
Again, again, again,
Tossed between ecstasy and pain ;

Still in the folded hollow darkness swells,
Sinks, swells, and every green-hung hollow fills,
Till there's no room for sound
Save that old anger rolled around ;

So into every hollow cliff of life,
Into this heart's deep cave so loud with strife,
In tunnels I knew not,
In lightless labyrinths of thought,

The unresting tide has run and the dark filled,
Even the vibration of old strife is stilled ;
The wave returning bears
Muted those time-breathing airs.

—How shall the million-footed tide still tread
These hollows and in each cold void cave spread ?
How shall Love here keep
Eternal motion grave and deep ?

John Freeman

Falls from her heaven the Moon, and stars sink burning
Into the sea where blackness rims the sea,
Silently quenched. Faint light that the waves hold
Is only light remaining; yet still gleam
The sands where those now-sleeping young moon-bathers
Came dripping out of the sea and from their arms
Shook flakes of light, dancing on the foamy edge
Of quiet waves. They were all things of light
Tossed from the sea to dance under the Moon—
Her nuns, dancing within her dying round,
Clear limbs and breasts silvered with Moon and waves
And quick with windlike mood and body's joy,
Withdrawn from alien vows, by wave and wind
Lightly absolved and lightly all forgetting.
An hour ago they left. Remains the gleam
Of their late motion on the salt sea-meadow,
As loveliest hues linger when the sun's gone
And float in the heavens and die in reedy pools—
So slowly, who shall say when light is gone?

John Freeman

IN THOSE OLD DAYS

In those old days you were called beautiful,
But I have worn the beauty from your face ;
The flowerlike bloom has withered on your cheek
With the harsh years, and the fire in your eyes
Burns darker now and deeper, feeding on
Beauty and the remembrance of things gone.
Even your voice is altered when you speak,
Or is grown mute with old anxiety
For me.

Even as a fire leaps into flame and burns
Leaping and laughing in its lovely flight,
And then under the flame a glowing dome
Deepens slowly into blood-like light :—
So did you flame and in flame take delight,
So are you hollow'd now with aching fire.
But I still warm me and make there my home,
Still beauty and youth burn there invisibly
For me.

Now my lips falling on your silver'd skull,
My fingers in the valleys of your cheeks,
Or my hands in your thin strong hands fast caught,
Your body clutched to mine, mine bent to yours :
Now love undying feeds on love beautiful,
Now, now I am but thought kissing your thought . . .
—And can it be in your heart's music speaks
A deeper rhythm hearing mine : can it be
Indeed for me ?

CATERPILLARS

John Freeman

Of caterpillars Fabre tells how day after day
Around the rim of a vast earth pot they crawled,
Tricked thither as they filed shuffling out one morn
Head to tail when the common hunger called.

Head to tail in a heaving ring day after day,
Night after slow night, the starving mommets crept,
Each following each, head to tail, day after day,
An unbroken ring of hunger—then it was snapt.

I thought of you, long-heaving, horned green caterpillars,
As I lay awake. My thoughts crawled each after each,
Crawling at night each after each on the same nerve,
An unbroken ring of thoughts too sore for speech.

Over and over and over and over again
The same hungry thoughts and the hopeless same regrets,
Over and over the same truths, again and again
In a heaving ring returning the same regrets.

John Freeman

CHANGE

I am that creature and creator who
Loosens and reins the waters of the sea,
Forming the rocky marge anon anew.
I stir the cold breasts of antiquity,
And in the soft stone of the pyramid
Move wormlike ; and I flutter all those sands
Whereunder lost and soundless time is hid.
I shape the hills and valleys with these hands,
And darken forests on their naked sides,
And call the rivers from the vexing springs,
And lead the blind winds into deserts strange.
And in firm human bones the ill that hides
Is mine, the fear that cries, the hope that sings.
I am that creature and creator, Change.

WILFRID GIBSON

FIRE

Wilfrid Gibson

In each black tile a mimic fire's aglow,
And in the hearthlight old mahogany,
Ripe with stored sunshine that in Mexico
Poured like gold wine into the living tree
Summer on summer through a century,
Burns like a crater in the heart of night:
And all familiar things in the ingle-light
Glow with a secret strange intensity.

And I remember hidden fires that burst
Suddenly from the midnight while men slept,
Long-smouldering rages in the darkness nursed
That to an instant ravening fury leapt,
And the old terror menacing evermore
A crumbling world with fiery molten core.

BARBARA FELL

Stephen, wake up! There's some one at the gate.
Quick, to the window . . . Oh, you'll be too late!
I hear the front door opening quietly.
Did you forget, last night, to turn the key?
A foot is on the stairs—nay, just outside
The very room—the door is opening wide . . .
Stephen, wake up, wake up! Who's there? Who's there?
I only feel a cold wind in my hair . . .
Have I been dreaming, Stephen? Husband, wake
And comfort me: I think my heart will break.
I never knew you sleep so sound and still. . . .
O my heart's love, why is your hand so chill?

PHILIP AND PHOEBE WARE

Wilfrid Gibson

Who is that woman, Philip, standing there
Before the mirror doing up her hair ?

You're dreaming, Phoebe, or the morning light
Mixing and mingling with the dying night
Makes shapes out of the darkness, and you see
Some dream-remembered phantasy maybe.

Yet it grows clearer with the growing day ;
And in the cold dawn light her hair is grey :
Her lifted arms are naught but bone : her hands
White withered claws that fumble as she stands
Trying to pin that wisp into its place.
O Philip, I must look upon her face
There in the mirror. Nay, but I will rise
And peep over her shoulder . . . Oh, the eyes
That burn out from that face of skin and bone,
Searching my very marrow, are my own.

BY THE WEIR

A scent of Esparto grass—and again I recall
That hour we spent by the weir of the paper-mill
Watching together the curving thunderous fall
Of frothing amber, bemused by the roar until
My mind was as blank as the speckless sheets that wound
On the hot steel ironing-rollers perpetually turning
In the humming dark rooms of the mill : all sense and discerning
By the stunning and dazzling oblivion of hill-waters drowned.

And my heart was empty of memory and hope and desire
Till, rousing, I looked afresh on your face as you gazed—
Behind you an old gnarled fruit-tree in one still fire
Of innumerable flame in the sun of October blazed,
Scarlet and gold that the first white frost would spill
With eddying flicker and patter of dead leaves falling—
I looked on your face, as an outcast from Eden recalling
A vision of Eve as she dallied bewildered and still

By the serpent-encircled tree of knowledge that flamed
With gold and scarlet of good and evil, her eyes
Rapt on the river of life : then bright and untamed
By the labour and sorrow and fear of a world that dies
Your ignorant eyes looked up into mine ; and I knew
That never our hearts should be one till your young lips had tasted
The core of the bitter-sweet fruit, and wise and toil-wasted
You should stand at my shoulder an outcast from Eden too.

WORLDS

Wilfrid Gibson

Through the pale green forest of tall bracken-stalks,
Whose interwoven fronds, a jade-green sky,
Above me glimmer, infinitely high,
Towards my giant hand a beetle walks
In glistening emerald mail; and as I lie
Watching his progress through huge grassy blades
And over pebble boulders, my own world fades
And shrinks to the vision of a beetle's eye.

Within that forest world of twilight green
Ambushed with unknown perils, one endless day
I travel down the beetle-trail between
Huge glossy boles through green infinity . . .
Till flashes a glimpse of blue sea through the bracken
asway,
And my world is again a tumult of windy sea.

ROBERT GRAVES

LOST LOVE

Robert Graves

His eyes are quickened so with grief,
He can watch a grass or leaf
Every instant grow; he can
Clearly through a flint wall see,
Or watch the startled spirit flee
From the throat of a dead man.
  Across two counties he can hear,
And catch your words before you speak.
The woodlouse or the maggot's weak
Clamour rings in his sad ear;
And noise so slight it would surpass
Credence:—drinking sound of grass,
Worm-talk, clashing jaws of moth
Chumbling holes in cloth:
The groan of ants who undertake
Gigantic loads for honour's sake—
Their sinews creak, their breath comes thin:
Whir of spiders when they spin,
And minute whispering, mumbling, sighs
Of idle grubs and flies.
  This man is quickened so with grief,
He wanders god-like or like thief
Inside and out, below, above,
Without relief seeking lost love.

Robert Graves

MORNING PHŒNIX

In my body lives a flame,
  Flame that burns me all the day ;
When a fierce sun does the same,
  I am charred away.

Who could keep a smiling wit,
  Roasted so in heart and hide,
Turning on the sun's red spit,
  Scorched by love inside ?

Caves I long for and cold rocks,
  Minnow-peopled country brooks,
Blundering gales of Equinox,
  Sunless valley-nooks,

Daily so I might restore
  Calcined heart and shrivelled skin,
A morning phœnix with proud roar
  Kindled new within.

A LOVER SINCE CHILDHOOD

Robert Graves

Tangled in thought am I,
Stumble in speech do I ?
Do I blunder and blush for the reason why ?
Wander aloof do I,
Lean over gates and sigh,
Making friends with the bee and the butterfly ?

If thus and thus I do,
Dazed by the thought of you,
Walking my sorrowful way in the early dew,
My heart cut through and through
In this despair of you,
Starved for a word or a look will my hope renew :

Give then a thought for me
Walking so miserably,
Wanting relief in the friendship of flower or tree ;
Do but remember, we
Once could in love agree,
Swallow your pride, let us be as we used to be.

Robert Graves

SULLEN MOODS

Love, do not count your labour lost
  Though I turn sullen, grim, retired
Even at your side; my thought is crossed
  With fancies by old longings fired.

And when I answer you, some days
  Vaguely and wildly, do not fear
That my love walks forbidden ways,
  Breaking the ties that hold it here.

If I speak gruffly, this mood is
  Mere indignation at my own
Shortcomings, plagues, uncertainties;
  I forget the gentler tone.

'You,' now that you have come to be
  My one beginning, prime and end,
I count at last as wholly 'me,'
  Lover no longer nor yet friend.

Friendship is flattery, though close hid;
  Must I then flatter my own mind?
And must (which laws of shame forbid)
  Blind love of you make self-love blind?

. . . Do not repay me my own coin,
  The sharp rebuke, the frown, the groan;
No, stir my memory to disjoin
  Your emanation from my own.

Help me to see you as before
  When overwhelmed and dead, almost,
I stumbled on that secret door
  Which saves the live man from the ghost.

Be once again the distant light,
  Promise of glory not yet known
In full perfection—wasted quite
  When on my imperfection thrown.

Robert Graves

Robert Graves

THE PIER-GLASS

Lost manor where I walk continually
A ghost, while yet in woman's flesh and blood ;
Up your broad stairs mounting with outspread fingers
And gliding steadfast down your corridors
I come by nightly custom to this room,
And even on sultry afternoons I come
Drawn by a thread of time-sunk memory.

Empty, unless for a huge bed of state
Shrouded with rusty curtains drooped awry
(A puppet theatre where malignant fancy
Peoples the wings with fear). At my right hand
A ravelled bell-pull hangs in readiness
To summon me from attic glooms above
Service of elder ghosts ; here at my left
A sullen pier-glass cracked from side to side
Scorns to present the face as do new mirrors
With a lying flush, but shows it melancholy
And pale, as faces grow that look in mirrors.

Is here no life, nothing but the thin shadow
And blank foreboding, never a wainscot rat
Rasping a crust ? Or at the window pane
No fly, no bluebottle, no starveling spider ?
The windows frame a prospect of cold skies
Half-merged with sea, as at the first creation,
Abstract, confusing welter. Face about,
Peer rather in the glass once more, take note
Of self, the grey lips and long hair dishevelled,
Sleep-staring eyes. Ah, mirror, for Christ's love
Give me one token that there still abides

Remote, beyond this island mystery, *Robert*
So be it only this side Hope, somewhere, *Graves*
In streams, on sun-warm mountain pasturage,
True life, natural breath ; not this phantasma.

A rumour, scarcely yet to be reckoned sound,
But a pulse quicker or slower, then I know
My plea is granted ; death prevails not yet.
For bees have swarmed behind in a close place
Pent up between this glass and the outer wall.
The combs are founded, the queen rules her court,
Bee-sergeants posted at the entrance-chink
Are sampling each returning honey-cargo
With scrutinizing mouth and commentary,
Slow approbation, quick dissatisfaction—
Disquieting rhythm, that leads me home at last
From labyrinthine wandering. This new mood
Of judgment orders me my present duty,
To face again a problem strongly solved
In life gone by, but now again proposed
Out of due time for fresh deliberation.
Did not my answer please the Master's ear ?
Yet, I'll stay obstinate. How went the question,
A paltry question set on the elements
Of love and the wronged lover's obligation ?
Kill or forgive ? Still does the bed ooze blood ?
Let it drip down till every floor-plank rot !
Yet shall I answer, challenging the judgment :—
' *Kill, strike the blow again, spite what shall come.*'
' Kill, strike, again, again,' the bees in chorus hum.

Robert Graves

THE TROLL'S NOSEGAY

A simple nosegay! was that much to ask?
(Winter still gloomed, with scarce a bud yet showing).
He loved her ill, if he resigned the task.
'Somewhere,' she cried, 'there must be blossom blowing.'
It seems my lady wept and the troll swore
By Heaven he hated tears: he'd cure her spleen;
Where she had begged one flower, he'd shower fourscore,
A haystack bunch to amaze a China Queen.

Cold fog-drawn Lily, pale mist-magic Rose
He conjured, and in a glassy cauldron set
With elvish unsubstantial Mignonette
And such vague bloom as wandering dreams enclose.
But she?
Awed,
Charmed to tears,
Distracted,
Yet—
Even yet, perhaps, a trifle piqued—who knows?

FOX'S DINGLE

Robert Graves

Take now a country mood,
  Resolve, distil it :—
Nine Acre swaying alive,
  June flowers that fill it,

Spicy sweet-briar bush,
  The uneasy wren
Fluttering from ash to birch
  And back again.

Milkwort on its low stem,
  Spread hawthorn tree,
Sunlight patching the wood,
  A hive-bound bee. . . .

Girls riding nim-nim-nim,
  Ladies, trot-trot,
Gentlemen hard at gallop,
  Shouting, steam-hot.

Now over the rough turf
  Bridles go jingle,
And there's a well-loved pool,
  By Fox's Dingle,

Where Sweetheart, my brown mare,
  Old Glory's daughter,
May loll her leathern tongue
  In snow-cool water.

THE GENERAL ELLIOTT

He fell in victory's fierce pursuit,
  Holed through and through with shot,
A sabre sweep had hacked him deep
  Twixt neck and shoulderknot. . . .

The potman cannot well recall,
  The ostler never knew,
Whether his day was Malplaquet,
  The Boyne or Waterloo.

But there he hangs for tavern sign,
  With foolish bold regard
For cock and hen and loitering men
  And wagons down the yard.

Raised high above the hayseed world
  He smokes his painted pipe,
And now surveys the orchard ways,
  The damsons clustering ripe.

He sees the churchyard slabs beyond,
  Where country neighbours lie,
Their brief renown set lowly down ;
  His name assaults the sky.

He grips the tankard of brown ale
  That spills a generous foam :
Oft-times he drinks, they say, and winks
  At drunk men lurching home.

No upstart hero may usurp
That honoured swinging seat;
His seasons pass with pipe and glass
Until the tale's complete.

And paint shall keep his buttons bright
Though all the world's forgot
Whether he died for England's pride
By battle, or by pot.

Robert Graves

Robert Graves

THE PATCHWORK BONNET

Across the room my silent love I throw,
Where you sit sewing in bed by candlelight,
Your young stern profile and industrious fingers
Displayed against the blind in a shadow-show,
To Dinda's grave delight.

The needle dips and pokes, the cheerful thread
Runs after, follow-my-leader down the seam:
The patchwork pieces cry for joy together,
O soon to sit as a crown on Dinda's head,
Fulfilment of their dream.

Snippets and odd ends folded by, forgotten,
With camphor on a top shelf, hard to find,
Now wake to this most happy resurrection,
To Dinda playing toss with a reel of cotton
And staring at the blind.

Dinda in sing-song stretching out one hand
Calls for the playthings; mother does not hear:
Her mind sails far away on a patchwork Ocean,
And all the world must wait till she touches land;
So Dinda cries in fear,

Then Mother turns, laughing like a young fairy,
And Dinda smiles to see her look so kind,
Calls out again for playthings, playthings, playthings;
And now the shadows make an Umbrian *Mary Adoring*, on the blind.

RICHARD HUGHES

THE SINGING FURIES

Richard Hughes

The yellow sky grows vivid as the sun :
The sea glittering, and the hills dun.

The stones quiver. Twenty pounds of lead
Fold upon fold, the air laps my head.

Both eyes scorch : tongue stiff and bitter :
Flies buzz, but no birds twitter :
Slow bullocks stand with stinging feet,
And naked fishes scarcely stir for heat.

White as smoke,
As jetted steam, dead clouds awoke
And quivered on the Western rim.
Then the singing started : dim
And sibilant as rime-stiff reeds
That whistle as the wind leads.
The South whispered hard and sere,
The North answered, low and clear ;
And thunder muffled up like drums
Beat, whence the East wind comes.
The heavy sky that could not weep
Is loosened : rain falls steep :
And thirty singing furies ride
To split the sky from side to side.

They sing, and lash the wet-flanked wind :
Sing, from Col to Hafod Mynd,
And fling their voices half a score
Of miles along the mounded shore :
Whip loud music from a tree,
And roll their pæan out to sea
Where crowded breakers fling and leap,
And strange things throb five fathoms deep.

Richard Hughes

The sudden tempest roared and died :
The singing furies muted ride
Down wet and slippery roads to hell :
And, silent in their captors' train,
Two fishers, storm-caught on the main ;
A shepherd, battered with his flocks ;
A pit-boy tumbled from the rocks ;
A dozen back-broke gulls, and hosts
Of shadowy, small, pathetic ghosts,
—Of mice and leverets caught by flood ;
Their beauty shrouded in cold mud.

MOONSTRUCK

Richard Hughes

Cold shone the moon, with noise
The night went by.
Trees uttered things of woe :
Bent grass dared not grow :

Ah, desperate man with haggard eyes
And hands that fence away the skies,
On rock and briar stumbling,
Is it fear of the storm's rumbling,
Of the hissing cold rain,
Or lightning's tragic pain
Drives you so madly ?
See, see the patient moon ;
How she her course keeps
Through cloudy shallows and across black deeps,
Now gone, now shines soon.
Where's cause for fear ?

' I shudder and shudder
At her bright light :
I fear, I fear,
That she her fixt course follows
So still and white
Through deeps and shallows
With never a tremor :
Naught shall disturb her.
I fear, I fear
What they may be
That secretly bind her :
What hand holds the reins
Of those sightless forces
That govern her courses.
Is it Setebos

Richard Hughes

Who deals in her command ?
Or that unseen Night-Comer
With tender curst hand ?
—I shudder, and shudder.'

Poor storm-wisp, wander !
Wind shall not hurt thee,
Rain not appal thee,
Lightning not blast thee ;
Thou art worn so frail,
Only the moonlight pale
To an ash shall burn thee,
To an invisible Pain.

VAGRANCY

Richard Hughes

When the slow year creeps hay-ward, and the skies
Are warming in the summer's mild surprise,
And the still breeze disturbs each leafy frond
Like hungry fishes dimpling in a pond,
It is a pleasant thing to dream at ease
On sun-warmed thyme, not far from beechen trees.

A robin flashing in a rowan-tree,
A wanton robin, spills his melody
As if he had such store of golden tones
That they were no more worth to him than stones :
The sunny lizards dream upon the ledges :
Linnets titter in and out the hedges,
Or swoop among the freckled butterflies.

Down to a beechen hollow winds the track
And tunnels past my twilit bivouac :
Two spiring wisps of smoke go singly up
And scarcely tremble in the leafy air.

—There are more shadows in this loamy cup
Than God could count : and oh, but it is fair :
The kindly green and rounded trunks, that meet
Under the soil with twinings of their feet
And in the sky with twinings of their arms :
The yellow stools : the still ungathered charms
Of berry, woodland herb, and bryony,
And mid-wood's changeling child, Anemone.

. . . . .

Quiet as a grave beneath a spire
I lie and watch the pointed climbing fire,
I lie and watch the smoky weather-cock
That climbs too high, and bends to the breeze's shock,
And breaks, and dances off across the skies
Gay as a flurry of blue butterflies.

Richard Hughes

But presently the evening shadows in,
Heralded by the night-jar's solitary din
And the quick bat's squeak among the trees ;
—Who sudden rises, darting across the air
To weave her filmy web in the Sun's bright hair
That slowly sinks dejected on his knees. . . .

Now is he vanished : the bewildered skies
Flame out a desperate and last surmise ;
Then yield to Night, their sudden conqueror.

From pole to pole the shadow of the world
Creeps over heaven, till itself is lit
By the very many stars that wake in it :
Sleep, like a messenger of great import,
Lays quiet and compelling hands athwart
The easy idlenesses of my mind.
—There is a breeze above me, and around :
There is a fire before me, and behind :
But Sleep doth hold me, and I hear no sound.

In the far West the clouds are mustering,
Without hurry, noise, or blustering :
And soon as Body's nightly Sentinel
Himself doth nod, I open furtive eyes. . . .

With darkling hook the Farmer of the Skies
Goes reaping stars : they flicker, one by one,
Nodding a little ; tumble,—and are gone.

POETS, PAINTERS, PUDDINGS

Richard Hughes

Poets, painters, and puddings ; these three
Make up the World as it ought to be.

Poets make faces
And sudden grimaces :
They twit you, and spit you
On words : then admit you
To heaven or hell
By the tales that they tell.

Painters are gay
As young rabbits in May :
They buy jolly mugs,
Bowls, pictures, and jugs :
The things round their necks
Are lively with checks,
(For they like something red
As a frame for the head) :
Or they'll curse you with oaths,
That tear holes in your clothes.
(With nothing to mend them
You'd best not offend them.)

Puddings should be
Full of currants, for me :
Boiled in a pail,
Tied in the tail
Of an old bleached shirt :
So hot that they hurt,
So huge that they last
From the dim, distant past
Until the crack o' doom
Lift the roof off the room.

Poets, painters, and puddings ; these three
Crown the day as it crowned should be.

WILLIAM KERR

IN MEMORIAM D.O.M.

William Kerr

Chestnut candles are lit again
For the dead that died in spring:
Dead lovers walk the orchard ways,
And the dead cuckoos sing.

Is it they who live and we who are dead?
Hardly the springtime knows
For which today the cuckoo calls,
And the white blossom blows.

Listen and hear the happy wind
Whisper and lightly pass:
'Your love is sweet as hawthorn is,
Your hope green as the grass.

'The hawthorn's faint and quickly gone,
The grass in autumn dies;
Put by your life, and see the spring
With everlasting eyes.'

Daisies are over Nyren, and Hambledon
Hardly remembers any summer gone :
And never again the Kentish elms shall see
Mynn, or Fuller Pilch, or Colin Blythe.
—Nor shall I see them, unless perhaps a ghost
Watching the elder ghosts beyond the moon.
But here in common sunshine I have seen
George Hirst, not yet a ghost, substantial,
His off-drives mellow as brown ale, and crisp
Merry late cuts, and brave Chaucerian pulls ;
Waddington's fury and the patience of Dipper ;
And twenty easy artful overs of Rhodes,
So many stanzas of the Faerie Queen.

THE AUDIT

William Kerr

Mere living wears the most of life away :
Even the lilies take thought for many things,
For frost in April and for drought in May,
And from no careless heart the skylark sings.

Those cheap utilities of rain and sun
Describe the foolish circle of our years,
Until death takes us, doing all undone,
And there's an end at last to hopes and fears.

Though song be hollow and no dreams come true,
Still songs and dreams are better than the truth :
But there's so much to get, so much to do,
Mary must drudge like Martha, dainty Ruth

Forget the morning music in the corn,
And Rachel grudge when Leah's boys are born.

William Kerr

THE APPLE TREE

Secret and wise as nature, like the wind
Melancholy or light-hearted without reason,
And like the waxing or the waning moon
Ever pale and lovely : you are like these
Because you are free and live by your own law ;
While I, desiring life and half alive,
Dream, hope, regret and fear and blunder on.
Your beauty is your life and my content,
And I will liken you to an apple-tree,
Mary and Margaret playing under the branches,
And everywhere soft shadows like your eyes,
And scattered blossom like your little smiles.

HER NEW-YEAR POSY

William Kerr

When I seek the world through
For images of you,
Though apple-blossom is glad
And the lily stately-sad,
Gilliflowers kind of breath,
Rosemary true till death ;
Though the wind can stir the grass
To memories as you pass,
And the soft-singing streams
Are music like your dreams ;
Though constant stars embrace
The quiet of your face,
Your smile lights up sunrise,
And evening's in your eyes—
Each so shadows its part,
All cannot show your heart ;
And weighing the beauty of earth
I see it so little worth,
When reckoned beside you,
That I hold heaven for true
—But all my heaven is you.

William Kerr

COUNTING SHEEP

Half-awake I walked
A dimly-seen sweet hawthorn lane
Until sleep came ;
I lingered at a gate and talked
A little with a lonely lamb.
He told me of the great still night,
Of calm starlight,
And of the lady moon, who'd stoop
For a kiss sometimes ;
Of grass as soft as sleep, of rhymes
The tired flowers sang :
The ageless April tales
Of how, when sheep grew old,
As their faith told,
They went without a pang
To far green fields, where fall
Perpetual streams that call
To deathless nightingales.
And then I saw, hard by,
A shepherd lad with shining eyes,
And round him gathered one by one
Countless sheep, snow-white ;
More and more they crowded
With tender cries,
Till all the field was full
Of voices and of coming sheep.
Countless they came, and I
Watched, until deep
As dream-fields lie
I was asleep.

THE TREES AT NIGHT

William Kerr

Under vague silver moonlight
The trees are lovely and ghostly,
In the pale blue of the night
There are few stars to see.

The leaves are green still, but brown-blent :
They stir not, only known
By a poignant delicate scent
To the lonely moon blown.

The lonely lovely trees sigh
For summer spent and gone :
A few homing leaves drift by,
Poor souls bewildered and wan.

William Kerr

THE DEAD

How shall the living be comforted for the dead
When they are gone, and nothing's left behind
But a vague music of the words they said
And a fast-fading image in the mind ?

Let no forgetting sully that dim grace ;
Our heart's infirmity is too easily won
To set a new love in the old love's place
And seek fresh vanity under the sun.

Time brings to us at last, as night the stars,
The starry silence of eternity :
For there is no discharge in our long wars,
Nor balm for wounds, nor love's security.

Be patient to the end, and you shall sleep
Pillowed on heartsease and forget to weep.

D. H. LAWRENCE

SNAKE

D. H. Lawrence

A snake came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second-comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

D. H. Lawrence

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth ?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him ?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him ?
Was it humility, to feel honoured ?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices :
If you were not afraid you would kill him.

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,
Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,

And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders,
and entered further,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursèd human education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

D. H. Lawrence

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate:
A pettiness.

HAROLD MONRO

THISTLEDOWN

Harold Monro

This might have been a place for sleep,
But, as from that small hollow there
Hosts of bright thistledown begin
Their dazzling journey through the air,
An idle man can only stare.

They grip their withered edge of stalk
In brief excitement for the wind ;
They hold a breathless final talk,
And when their filmy cables part
One almost hears a little cry.

Some cling together while they wait,
And droop and gaze and hesitate,
But others leap along the sky,
Or circle round and calmly choose
The gust they know they ought to use ;

While some in loving pairs will glide,
Or watch the others as they pass,
Or rest on flowers in the grass,
Or circle through the shining day
Like silvery butterflies at play.

Some catch themselves to every mound,
Then lingeringly and slowly move
As if they knew the precious ground
Were opening for their fertile love :
They almost try to dig, they need
So much to plant their thistle-seed.

Harold Monro

REAL PROPERTY

Tell me about that harvest field.
Oh! Fifty acres of living bread.
The colour has painted itself in my heart;
The form is patterned in my head.

So now I take it everywhere,
See it whenever I look round;
Hear it growing through every sound,
Know exactly the sound it makes—
Remembering, as one must all day,
Under the pavement the live earth aches.

Trees are at the farther end,
Limes all full of the mumbling bee:
So there must be a harvest field
Whenever one thinks of a linden tree.

A hedge is about it, very tall,
Hazy and cool, and breathing sweet.
Round paradise is such a wall,
And all the day, in such a way,
In paradise the wild birds call.

You only need to close your eyes
And go within your secret mind,
And you'll be into paradise:
I've learnt quite easily to find
Some linden trees and drowsy bees,
A tall sweet hedge with the corn behind.

I will not have that harvest mown:
I'll keep the corn and leave the bread.
I've bought that field; it's now my own:
I've fifty acres in my head.
I take it as a dream to bed.
I carry it about all day. . . .

Sometimes when I have found a friend
I give a blade of corn away.

UNKNOWN COUNTRY

Harold Monro

Here, in this other world, they come and go
With easy dream-like movements to and fro.
They stare through lovely eyes, yet do not seek
An answering gaze, or that a man should speak.
Had I a load of gold, and should I come
Bribing their friendship, and to buy a home,
They would stare harder and would slightly frown :
I am a stranger from the distant town.

Oh, with what patience I have tried to win
The favour of the hostess of the Inn !
Have I not offered toast on frothing toast
Looking toward the melancholy host ;
Praised the old wall-eyed mare to please the groom ;
Laughed to the laughing maid and fetched her broom ;
Stood in the background not to interfere
When the cool ancients frolicked at their beer ;
Talked only in my turn, and made no claim
For recognition or by voice or name,
Content to listen, and to watch the blue
Or grey of eyes, or what good hands can do ?

Sun-freckled lads, who at the dusk of day
Stroll through the village with a scent of hay
Clinging about you from the windy hill,
Why do you keep your secret from me still ?
You loiter at the corner of the street ;
I in the distance silently entreat.
I know too well I'm city-soiled, but then
So are today ten million other men.
My heart is true : I've neither will nor charms
To lure away your maidens from your arms.
Trust me a little. Must I always stand
Lonely, a stranger from an unknown land ?

Harold Monro

There is a riddle here. Though I'm more wise
Than you, I cannot read your simple eyes.
I find the meaning of their gentle look
More difficult than any learnèd book.
I pass : perhaps a moment you may chaff
My walk, and so dismiss me with a laugh.
I come : you all, most grave and most polite,
Stand silent first, then wish me calm Good-Night.
When I go back to town some one will say :
' I think that stranger must have gone away.'
And ' Surely ! ' some one else will then reply.
Meanwhile, within the dark of London, I
Shall, with my forehead resting on my hand,
Not cease remembering your distant land ;
Endeavouring to reconstruct aright
How some treed hill has looked in evening light ;
Or be imagining the blue of skies
Now as in heaven, now as in your eyes ;
Or in my mind confusing looks or words
Of yours with dawnlight, or the song of birds :
Not able to resist, not even keep
Myself from hovering near you in my sleep :
You still as callous to my thought and me
As flowers to the purpose of the bee.

ROBERT NICHOLS

NIGHT RHAPSODY

Robert Nichols

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
When over all there reigns the ultimate spell
Of complete silence, darkness absolute,
To feel the world, tilted on axle-tree,
In slow gyration, with no sensible sound,
Unless to ears of unimagined beings,
Resident incorporeal or stretched
In vigilance of ecstasy among
Ethereal paths and the celestial maze.
The rumour of our onward course now brings
A steady rustle, as of some strange ship
Darkling with soundless sail all set and amply filled
By volume of an ever-constant air,
At fullest night, through seas for ever calm,
Swept lovely and unknown for ever on.

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
Embalmed in darkness watchful, sweet, and still,
As is the brain's mood flattered by the swim
Of currents circumvolvent in the void,
To lie quite still and to become aware
Of the dim light cast by nocturnal skies
On a dim earth beyond the window-ledge,
So, isolate from the friendly company
Of the huge universe which turns without,
To brood apart in calm and joy awhile
Until the spirit sinks and scarcely knows
Whether self is, or if self only is,
For ever . . . .

How beautiful to wake at night,
Within the room grown strange, and still, and sweet,
And live a century while in the dark

Robert Nichols

The dripping wheel of silence slowly turns ;
To watch the window open on the night,
A dewy silent deep where nothing stirs,
And, lying thus, to feel dilate within
The press, the conflict, and the heavy pulse
Of incommunicable sad ecstasy,
Growing until the body seems outstretched
In perfect crucifixion on the arms
Of a cross pointing from last void to void,
While the heart dies to a mere midway spark.

All happiness thou holdest, happy night,
For such as lie awake and feel dissolved
The peaceful spice of darkness and the cool
Breath hither blown from the ethereal flowers
That mist thy fields ! O happy, happy wounds,
Conditioned by existence in humanity,
That have such powers to heal them ! slow sweet sighs
Torn from the bosom, silent wails, the birth
Of such long-treasured tears as pain his eyes,
Who, waking, hears the divine solicitudes
Of midnight with ineffable purport charged.

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
Another night, in darkness yet more still,
Save when the myriad leaves on full-fledged boughs,
Filled rather by the perfume's wandering flood
Than by dispansion of the still sweet air,
Shall from the furthest utter silences
In glimmering secrecy have gathered up
An host of whisperings and scattered sighs,
To loose at last a sound as of the plunge
And lapsing seethe of some Pacific wave,
Which, risen from the star-thronged outer troughs,
Rolls in to wreathe with circling foam away

The flutter of the golden moths that haunt
The star's one glimmer daggered on wet sands.

Robert Nichols

So beautiful it is to wake at night!
Imagination, loudening with the surf
Of the midsummer wind among the boughs,
Gathers my spirit from the haunts remote
Of faintest silence and the shades of sleep,
To bear me on the summit of her wave
Beyond known shores, beyond the mortal edge
Of thought terrestrial, to hold me poised
Above the frontiers of infinity,
To which in the full reflux of the wave
Come soon I must, bubble of solving foam,
Borne to those other shores—now never mine
Save for a hovering instant, short as this
Which now sustains me ere I be drawn back—
To learn again, and wholly learn, I trust,
How beautiful it is to wake at night.

NOVEMBER

As I walk the misty hill
All is languid, fogged, and still ;
Not a note of any bird
Nor any motion's hint is heard,
Save from soaking thickets round
Trickle or water's rushing sound,
And from ghostly trees the drip
Of runnel dews or whispering slip
Of leaves, which in a body launch
Listlessly from the stagnant branch
To strew the marl, already strown,
With litter sodden as its own,

A rheum, like blight, hangs on the briars,
And from the clammy ground suspires
A sweet frail sick autumnal scent
Of stale frost furring weeds long spent ;
And wafted on, like one who sleeps,
A feeble vapour hangs or creeps,
Exhaling on the fungus mould
A breath of age, fatigue, and cold.

Oozed from the bracken's desolate track,
By dark rains havocked and drenched black,
A fog about the coppice drifts,
Or slowly thickens up and lifts
Into the moist, despondent air.

Mist, grief, and stillness everywhere. . . .

And in me, too, there is no sound
Save welling as of tears profound,

Where in me cloud, grief, stillness reign, *Robert*
And an intolerable pain *Nichols*
Begins.
Rolled on as in a flood there come
Memories of childhood, boyhood, home,
And that which, sudden, pangs me most,
Thought of the first-belov'd, long lost,
Too easy lost! My cold lips frame
Tremulously the familiar name,
Unheard of her upon my breath:
'Elizabeth. Elizabeth.'

No voice answers on the hill,
All is shrouded, sad, and still . . .
Stillness, fogged brakes, and fog on high.
Only in me the waters cry
Who mourn the hours now slipped for ever,
Hours of boding, joy, and fever,
When we loved, by chance beguiled,
I a boy and you a child—
Child! but with an angel's air,
Astonished, eager, unaware,
Or elfin's, wandering with a grace
Foreign to any fireside race,
And with a gaiety unknown
In the light feet and hair backblown,
And with a sadness yet more strange,
In meagre cheeks which knew to change
Or faint or fired more swift than sight,
And forlorn hands and lips pressed white,
And fragile voice, and head downcast,
Hiding tears, lifted at the last
To speed with one pale smile the wise
Glance of the grey immortal eyes.

Robert Nichols

How strange it was that we should dare
Compound a miracle so rare
As, 'twixt this pace and Time's next pace,
Each to discern th' elected's face !
Yet stranger that the high sweet fire,
In hearts nigh foreign to desire,
Could burn, sigh, weep, and burn again
As oh, it never has since then !
Most strange of all that we so young
Dared learn but would not speak love's tongue,
Love pledged but in the reveries
Of our sad and dreaming eyes. . . .

Now upon such journey bound me,
Grief, disquiet, and stillness round me,
As bids me where I cannot tell,
Turn I and sigh, unseen, farewell.
Breathe the name as soft as mist,
Lips, which nor kissed her nor were kissed !
And again—a sigh, a death—
'Elizabeth. Elizabeth.'

No voice answers ; but the mist
Glows for a moment amethyst
Ere the hid sun dissolves away,
And dimness, growing dimmer grey,
Hides all . . . till nothing can I see
But the blind walls enclosing me,
And no sound and no motion hear
But the vague water throbbing near,
Sole voice upon the darkening hill
Where all is blank and dead and still.

J. D. C. PELLOW

AFTER LONDON

J. D. C.
Pellow

London Bridge is broken down ;
  Green is the grass on Ludgate Hill ;
I know a farmer in Camden Town
  Killed a brock by Pentonville.

I have heard my grandam tell
  How some thousand years ago
Houses stretched from Camberwell
  Right to Highbury and Bow.

Down by Shadwell's golden meads
  Tall ships' masts would stand as thick
As the pretty tufted reeds
  That the Wapping children pick.

All the kings from end to end
  Of all the world paid tribute then,
And meekly on their knees would bend
  To the King of the Englishmen.

Thinks I while I dig my plot,
  What if your grandam's tales be true ?
Thinks I, be they true or not,
  What's the odds to a fool like you ?

Thinks I, while I smoke my pipe
  Here beside the tumbling Fleet,
Apples drop when they are ripe,
  And when they drop are they most sweet.

J. D. C. Pellow

ON A FRIEND WHO DIED SUDDENLY UPON THE SEASHORE

Quiet he lived, and quietly died ;
Nor, like the unwilling tide,
Did once complain or strive
To stay one brief hour more alive.
But as a summer wave
Serenely for a while
Will lift a crest to the sun,
Then sink again, so he
Back to the bright heavens gave
An answering smile ;
Then quietly, having run
His course, bowed down his head,
And sank unmurmuringly,
Sank back into the sea,
The silent, the unfathomable sea
Of all the happy dead.

TENEBRAE

J. D. C.
Pellow

They say that I shall find him if I go
Along the dusty highways, or the green
Tracks of the downland shepherds, or between
The swaying corn, or where cool waters flow ;
And others say, that speak as if they know,
That daily in the cities, in the mean
Dark streets, amid the crowd he may be seen,
With thieves and harlots wandering to and fro.

But I am blind. How shall a blind man dare
Venture along the roaring crowded street,
Or branching roads where I may never hit
The way he has gone ? But someday if I sit
Quietly at this corner listening, there
May come this way the slow sound of his feet.

J. D. C.
Pellow

WHEN ALL IS SAID

When all is said
And all is done
Beneath the Sun,
And Man lies dead ;

When all the earth
Is a cold grave,
And no more brave
Bright things have birth ;

When cooling sun
And stone-cold world,
Together hurled,
Flame up as one—

O Sons of Men,
When all is flame,
What of your fame
And splendour then ?

When all is fire
And flaming air,
What of your rare
And high desire

To turn the clod
To a thing divine,
The earth a shrine,
And Man the God ?

FRANK PREWETT

TO MY MOTHER IN CANADA, FROM SICK-BED IN ITALY

Frank Prewett

Dear mother, from the sure sun and warm seas
Of Italy, I, sick, remember now
What sometimes is forgot in times of ease,
Our love, the always felt but unspoken vow.
So send I beckoning hands from here to there,
And kiss your black once, now white thin-grown hair
And your stooped small shoulder and pinched brow.

Here, mother, there is sunshine every day ;
It warms the bones and breathes upon the heart ;
But you I see out-plod a little way,
Bitten with cold ; your cheeks and fingers smart.
Would you were here, we might in temples lie,
And look from azure into azure sky,
And paradise achieve, slipping death's part.

But now 'tis time for sleep : I think no speech
There needs to pass between us what we mean,
For we soul-venturing mingle each with each.
So, mother, pass across the world unseen
And share in me some wished-for dream in you ;
For so brings destiny her pledges true,
The mother withered, in the son grown green.

Met ye my love ?
Ye might in France have met him ;
He has a wooing smile,
Who sees cannot forget him !
Met ye my Love ?
—We shared full many a mile.

Saw ye my Love ?
In lands far-off he has been,
With his yellow-tinted hair—
In Egypt such ye have seen ;
Ye knew my love ?
—I was his brother there.

Heard ye my love ?
My love ye must have heard,
For his voice when he will
Tinkles like cry of a bird ;
Heard ye my love ?
—We sang on a Grecian hill.

Behold your love,
And how shall I forget him,
His smile, his hair, his song ?
Alas, no maid shall get him
For all her love,
Where he sleeps a million strong.

THE SOMME VALLEY, JUNE, 1917

Frank Prewett

Comrade, why do you weep ?
  Is it sorrow for a friend
Who fell, rifle in hand,
  His last stand at an end ?

The thunder-lipped grey guns
  Lament him, fierce and slow,
Where he found his dreamless bed,
  Head to head with a foe.

The sweet lark beats on high
  For the peace of those who sleep
In the quiet embrace of earth :
  Comrade, why do you weep ?

Frank Prewett

BURIAL STONES

The blue sky arches wide
From hill to hill;
The little grasses stand
Upright and still.

Only these stones to tell
The deadly strife,
The all-important schemes,
The greed for life.

For they are gone, who fought;
But still the skies
Stretch blue, aloof, unchanged,
From rise to rise.

SNOW-BUNTINGS

Frank Prewett

They come fluttering helpless to the ground
Like wreaths of wind-caught snow,
Uttering a plaintive, chirping sound,
And rise and fall, and know not where they go.

So small they are, with feathers ruffled blown,
Adrift between earth desolate and leaden sky;
Nor have they ever known
Any but frozen earth, and scudding clouds on high.

What hand doth guide these hapless creatures small
To sweet seeds that the withered grasses hold?—
The little children of men go hungry all,
And stiffen and cry with numbing cold.

In a sudden gust the flock are whirled away
Uttering a frightened, chirping cry,
And are lost like a wraith of departing day,
Adrift between earth desolate and leaden sky.

Frank Prewett

THE KELSO ROAD

Morning and evening are mine,
And the bright noon-day;
But night to no man doth belong
When the sad ghosts play.

From Kelso town I took the road
By the full-flood Tweed;
The black clouds swept across the moon
With devouring greed.

Seek ye no peace who tread the night;
I felt above my head
Blowing the cloud's edge, faces wry
In pale fury spread.

Twelve surly elves were digging graves
Beside black Eden brook;
Eleven dug and stared at me,
But one read in a book.

In Birgham trees and hedges rocked,
The moon was drowned in black;
At Hirsel woods I shrieked to find
A fiend astride my back.

His legs he closed about my breast,
His hands upon my head,
Till Coldstream lights beamed in the trees
And he wailed and fled.

Morning and evening are mine,
And the bright noon-heat,
But at night the sad thin ghosts
For their revels meet.

BALDON LANE

Frank Prewett

As I went down the Baldon lane,
Alone I went, as oft I went,
Weighing if it were loss or gain
To give a maidenhead.
I met, just as the day was spent,
A fancy man, a gentleman,
Who smiled on me, and then began,
'Come sit with me, my maid.'

With him had I no mind to sit
In Baldon lane for loss or gain,
Said I to him with feeble wit,
And close beside him crept;
The branches might have heard my pain,
The sudden cry, the maiden cry,—
My fancy man departed sly,
And woman-like, I wept.

I kept the roads until my bed,
A nine months' time, a weary time,
And then to Baldon woods I fled
In Spring-time weather mild;
The kindly trees, they fear no crime,
So back I came, to Baldon came,
Received their welcome without blame,
And moaned and dropped my child.

The poor brat gasped an hour or so,
A goodly child, a thoughtful child;
Perceiving nought for us but woe
It stretched and sudden died;
But I, when Spring breaks fresh and mild,
To Baldon lane return again,
For there's my home, and women vain
Must hold their homes in pride.

Frank Prewett

COME GIRL, AND EMBRACE

Come girl, and embrace
And ask no more I wed thee ;
Know then you are sweet of face,
Soft-limbed and fashioned lovingly ;—
Must you go marketing your charms
In cunning woman-like,
And filled with old wives' tales' alarms ?

I tell you, girl, come embrace ;
What reck we of churchling and priest
With hands on paunch, and chubby face ?
Behold, we are life's pitiful least,
And we perish at the first smell
Of death, whither heaves earth
To spurn us cringing into hell.

Come girl, and embrace ;
Nay, cry not, poor wretch, nor plead,
But haste, for life strikes a swift pace,
And I burn with envious greed :
Know you not, fool, we are the mock
Of gods, time, clothes, and priests ?
But come, there is no time for talk.

PETER QUENNELL

PROCNE (A FRAGMENT)

Peter Quennell

So she became a bird, and bird-like danced
On a long sloe-bough, treading the silver blossom
With a bird's lovely feet ;
And shaken blossoms fell into the hands
Of Sunlight. And he held them for a moment
And let them drop.
And in the autumn Procne came again
And leapt upon the crooked sloe-bough singing,
And the dark berries winked like earth-dimmed beads,
As the branch swung beneath her dancing feet.

Peter Quennell

A MAN TO A SUNFLOWER

See, I have bent thee by thy saffron hair
—O most strange masker—
Towards my face, thy face so full of eyes
—O almost legendary monster—
Thee of the saffron, circling hair I bend,
Bend by my fingers knotted in thy hair
—Hair like broad flames.
So, shall I swear by beech-husk, spindleberry,
To break thee, saffron hair and peering eye,
—To have the mastery ?

PERCEPTION

Peter Quennell

While I have vision, while the glowing-bodied,
Drunken with light, untroubled clouds, with all this cold sphered sky,
Are flushed above trees where the dew falls secretly,
Where no man goes, where beasts move silently,
As gently as light feathered winds that fall
Chill among hollows filled with sighing grass ;
While I have vision, while my mind is borne
A finger's length above reality,
Like that small plaining bird that drifts and drops
Among these soft lapped hollows ;
Robed gods, whose passing fills calm nights with sudden wind,
Whose spears still bar our twilight, bend and fill
Wind-shaken, troubled spaces with some peace,
With clear untroubled beauty ;
That I may rise not chill and shrilling through perpetual day,
Remote, amazèd, larklike, but may hold
The hours as firm, warm fruit,
This finger's length above reality.

Peter Quennell

PURSUIT

As wind-drowned scents that bring to other hills
Disquieting memories of silences,
Broad silences beyond the memory;
As feathered swaying seeds, as wings of birds
Dappling the sky with honey-coloured gold;
Faint murmurs, clear, keen-winged of swift ideas
Break my small silences;
And I must hunt and come to tire of hunting
Strange laughing thoughts that roister through my mind,
Hopelessly swift to flit; and so I hunt
And come to tire of hunting.

V. SACKVILLE-WEST

A SAXON SONG

V. Sackville-West

Tools with the comely names,
Mattock and scythe and spade,
Couth and bitter as flames,
Clean, and bowed in the blade,—
A man and his tools make a man and his trade.

Breadth of the English shires,
Hummock and kame and mead,
Tang of the reeking byres,
Land of the English breed,—
A man and his land make a man and his creed.

Leisurely flocks and herds,
Cool-eyed cattle that come
Mildly to wonted words,
Swine that in orchards roam,—
A man and his beasts make a man and his home.

Children sturdy and flaxen
Shouting in brotherly strife,
Like the land they are Saxon,
Sons of a man and his wife,—
For a man and his loves make a man and his life.

V. Sackville-West

MARIANA IN THE NORTH

All her youth is gone, her beautiful youth outworn,
Daughter of tarn and tor, the moors that were once her home
No longer know her step on the upland tracks forlorn
Where she was wont to roam.

All her hounds are dead, her beautiful hounds are dead,
That paced beside the hoofs of her high and nimble horse,
Or streaked in lean pursuit of the tawny hare that fled
Out of the yellow gorse.

All her lovers have passed, her beautiful lovers have passed,
The young and eager men that fought for her arrogant hand,
And the only voice which endures to mourn for her at the last
Is the voice of the lonely land.

FULL MOON

V. Sackville-West

She was wearing the coral taffeta trousers
Someone had brought her from Ispahan,
And the little gold coat with pomegranate blossoms,
And the coral-hafted feather fan ;
But she ran down a Kentish lane in the moonlight,
And skipped in the pool of the moon as she ran.

She cared not a rap for all the big planets,
For Betelgeuse or Aldebaran,
And all the big planets cared nothing for her,
That small impertinent charlatan ;
But she climbed on a Kentish stile in the moonlight,
And laughed at the sky through the sticks of her fan.

V. Sackville-West

SAILING SHIPS

Lying on Downs above the wrinkling bay
I with the kestrels shared the cleanly day,
The candid day; wind-shaven, brindled turf;
Tall cliffs; and long sea-line of marbled surf
From Cornish Lizard to the Kentish Nore
Lipping the bulwarks of the English shore,
While many a lovely ship below sailed by
On unknown errand, kempt and leisurely;
And after each, oh, after each, my heart
Fled forth, as, watching from the Downs apart,
I shared with ships good joys and fortunes wide
That might befall their beauty and their pride;

Shared first with them the blessèd void repose
Of oily days at sea, when only rose
The porpoise's slow wheel to break the sheen
Of satin water indolently green,
When for'ard the crew, caps tilted over eyes,
Lay heaped on deck; slept; mumbled; smoked;
threw dice;
The sleepy summer days; the summer nights
(The coast pricked out with rings of harbour-lights),
The motionless nights, the vaulted nights of June
When high in the cordage drifts the entangled moon,
And blocks go knocking, and the sheets go slapping,
And lazy swells against the sides come lapping;
And summer mornings off red Devon rocks,
Faint inland bells at dawn and crowing cocks;

Shared swifter days, when headlands into ken
Trod grandly; threatened; and were lost again,
Old fangs along the battlemented coast;

And followed still my ship, when winds were most — *V. Sackville-West*
Night-purified, and, lying steeply over,
She fled the wind as flees a girl her lover,
Quickened by that pursuit for which she fretted,
Her temper by the contest proved and whetted.
Wild stars swept overhead ; her lofty spars
Reared to a ragged heaven sown with stars
As leaping out from narrow English ease
She faced the roll of long Atlantic seas.

Her captain then was I, I was her crew,
The mind that laid her course, the wake she drew,
The waves that rose against her bows, the gales,—
Nay, I was more : I was her very sails
Rounded before the wind, her eager keel,
Her straining mast-heads, her responsive wheel,
Her pennon stiffened like a swallow's wing ;
Yes, I was all her slope and speed and swing,
Whether by yellow lemons and blue sea
She dawdled through the isles off Thessaly,
Or saw the palms like sheaves of scimitars
On desert's verge below the sunset bars,
Or passed the girdle of the planet where
The Southern Cross looks over to the Bear,
And strayed, cool Northerner beneath strange skies,
Flouting the lure of tropic estuaries,
Down that long coast, and saw Magellan's Clouds
arise.

And some that beat up Channel homeward-bound
I watched, and wondered what they might have found,
What alien ports enriched their teeming hold
With crates of fruit or bars of unwrought gold ?
And thought how London clerks with paper-clips
Had filed the bills of lading of those ships,

V. Sackville-West

Clerks that had never seen the embattled sea,
But wrote down jettison and barratry,
Perils, Adventures, and the Act of God,
Having no vision of such wrath flung broad;
Wrote down with weary and accustomed pen
The classic dangers of sea-faring men;
And wrote 'Restraint of Princes,' and 'the Acts
Of the King's Enemies,' as vacant facts,
Blind to the ambushed seas, the encircling roar
Of angry nations foaming into war.

TRIO

V. Sackville-West

So well she knew them both ! yet as she came
Into the room, and heard their speech
Of tragic meshes knotted with her name,
And saw them, foes, but meeting each with each
Closer than friends, souls bared through enmity,
Beneath their startled gaze she thought that she
Broke as the stranger on their conference,
And stole abashed from thence.

Yes, they were kind exceedingly; most mild
Even in indignation, taking by the hand
One that obeyed them mutely, as a child
Submissive to a law he does not understand.

They would not blame the sins his passion wrought.
No, they were tolerant and Christian, saying, 'We
Only deplore . . .' saying they only sought
To help him, strengthen him, to show him love; but he

Following them with unrecalcitrant tread,
Quiet, towards their town of kind captivities,
Having slain rebellion, ever turned his head
Over his shoulder, seeking still with his poor eyes

Her motionless figure on the road. The song
Rang still between them, vibrant bell to answering bell,
Full of young glory as a bugle; strong;
Still brave; now breaking like a sea-bird's cry 'Farewell!'

And they, they whispered kindly to him 'Come!
Now we have rescued you. Let your heart heal.
Forget!
She was your lawless dark familiar.' Dumb,
He listened, and they thought him acquiescent. Yet,

(Knowing the while that they were very kind)
Remembrance clamoured in him: 'She was wild and free,
Magnificent in giving; she was blind
To gain or loss, and, loving, loved but me,—but me!

'Valiant she was, and comradely, and bold; *V. Sackville-West*
High-mettled; all her thoughts a challenge, like
gay ships
Adventurous, with treasure in the hold.
I met her with the lesson put into my lips,

'Spoke reason to her, and she bowed her head,
Having no argument, and giving up the strife.
She said I should be free. I think she said
That, for the asking, she would give me all her life.'

And still they led him onwards, and he still
Looked back towards her standing there; and they,
content,
Cheered him and praised him that he did their will.
The gradual distance hid them, and she turned, and
went.

V. Sackville-West

EVENING

When little lights in little ports come out,
Quivering down through water with the stars,
And all the fishing fleet of slender spars
Range at their moorings, veer with tide about ;

When race of wind is stilled and sails are furled,
And underneath our single riding-light
The curve of black-ribbed deck gleams palely white,
And slumbrous waters pool a slumbrous world ;

—Then, and then only, have I thought how sweet
Old age might sink upon a windy youth,
Quiet beneath the riding-light of truth,
Weathered through storms, and gracious in retreat.

EDWARD SHANKS

THE ROCK POOL

Edward Shanks

This is the sea. In these uneven walls
A wave lies prisoned. Far and far away
Outward to ocean, as the slow tide falls,
Her sisters through the capes that hold the bay
Dancing in lovely liberty recede.
Yet lovely in captivity she lies,
Filled with soft colours, where the wavering weed
Moves gently and discloses to our eyes
Blurred shining veins of rock and lucent shells
Under the light-shot water ; and here repose
Small quiet fish and dimly glowing bells
Of sleeping sea-anemones that close
Their tender fronds and will not now awake
Till on these rocks the waves returning break.

Edward Shanks

THE GLADE

We may raise our voices even in this still glade :
Though the colours and shadows and sounds so fleeting seem,
We shall not dispel them. They are not made
Frailly by earth or hands, but immortal in our dream.

We may touch the faint violets with the hands of thought,
Or lay the pale core of the wild arum bare ;
And for ever in our minds the white wild cherry is caught,
Cloudy against the sky and melting into air.

This which we have seen is eternally ours,
No others shall tread in the glade which now we see ;
Their hands shall not touch the frail tranquil flowers,
Nor their hearts faint in wonder at the wild white tree.

MEMORY

Edward Shanks

In silence and in darkness memory wakes
Her million sheathèd buds, and breaks
That day-long winter when the light and noise
And hard bleak breath of the outward-looking will
Made barren her tender soil, when every voice
Of her million airy birds was muffled or still.

One bud-sheath breaks :
One sudden voice awakes.

What change grew in our hearts, seeing one night
That moth-winged ship drifting across the bay,
Her broad sail dimly white
On cloudy waters and hills as vague as they ?
Some new thing touched our spirits with distant delight,
Half-seen, half-noticed, as we loitered down,
Talking in whispers, to the little town,
Down from the narrow hill
—Talking in whispers, for the air so still
Imposed its stillness on our lips, and made
A quiet equal with the equal shade
That filled the slanting walk. That phantom now
Slides with slack canvas and unwhispering prow
Through the dark sea that this dark room has made.

Or the night of the closed eyes will turn to day,
And all day's colours start out of the gray.
The sun burns on the water. The tall hills
Push up their shady groves into the sky,
And fail and cease where the intense light spills
Its parching torrent on the gaunt and dry

Edward Shanks

Rock of the further mountains, whence the snow
That softened their harsh edges long is gone,
And nothing tempers now
The hot flood falling on the barren stone.

O memory, take and keep
All that my eyes, your servants, bring you home—
Those other days beneath the low white dome
Of smooth-spread clouds that creep
As slow and soft as sleep,
When shade grows pale and the cypress stands upright,
Distinct in the cool light,
Rigid and solid as a dark hewn stone ;
And many another night,
That melts in darkness on the narrow quays,
And changes every colour and every tone,
And soothes the waters to a softer ease,
When under constellations coldly bright
The homeward sailors sing their way to bed
On ships that motionless in harbour float.
The circling harbour-lights flash green and red ;
And, out beyond, a steady travelling boat,
Breaking the swell with slow industrious oars,
At each stroke pours
Pale lighted water from the lifted blade.
Now in the painted houses all around
Slow-darkening windows call
The empty unwatched middle of the night.
The tide's few inches rise without a sound.
On the black promontory's windless head,
The last awake, the fireflies rise and fall
And tangle up their dithering skeins of light.

O memory, take and keep
All that my eyes, your servants, bring you home !

Thick through the changing year
The unexpected, rich-charged moments come,
That you twixt wake and sleep
In the lids of the closed eyes shall make appear.

Edward Shanks

This is life's certain good,
Though in the end it be not good at all
When the dark end arises,
And the stripped, startled spirit must let fall
The amulets that could
Prevail with life's but not death's sad devices.

Then, like a child from whom an older child
Forces its gathered treasures,
Its beads and shells and strings of withered flowers,
Tokens of recent pleasures,
The soul must lose in eyes weeping and wild
Those prints of vanished hours.

Edward Shanks

WOMAN'S SONG

No more upon my bosom rest thee,
Too often have my hands caressed thee,
My lips thou knowest well, too well;
Lean to my heart no more thine ear
My spirit's living truth to hear
—It has no more to tell.

In what dark night, in what strange night,
Burnt to the butt the candle's light
That lit our room so long?
I do not know, I thought I knew
How love could be both sweet and true:
I also thought it strong.

Where has the flame departed? Where,
Amid the empty waste of air,
Is that which dwelt with us?
Was it a fancy? Did we make
Only a show for dead love's sake,
It being so piteous?

No more against my bosom press thee,
Seek no more that my hands caress thee,
Leave the sad lips thou hast known so well;
If to my heart thou lean thine ear,
There grieving thou shalt only hear
Vain murmuring of an empty shell.

THE WIND

Edward Shanks

Blow harder, wind, and drive
My blood from hands and face back to the heart.
Cry over ridges and down tapering coombs,
Carry the flying dapple of the clouds
Over the grass, over the soft-grained plough,
Stroke with ungentle hand the hill's rough hair
Against its usual set.
Snatch at the reins in my dead hands and push me
Out of my saddle, blow my labouring pony
Across the track. You only drive my blood
Nearer the heart from face and hands, and plant there,
Slowly burning, unseen, but alive and wonderful,
A numb, confusèd joy!
This little world's in tumult. Far away
The dim waves rise and wrestle with each other
And fall down headlong on the beach. And here
Quick gusts fly up the funnels of the valleys
And meet their raging fellows on the hill-tops,
And we are in the midst.
This beating heart, enriched with the hands' blood,
Stands in the midst and feels the warm joy burn
In solitude and silence, while all about
The gusts clamour like living, angry birds,
And the gorse seems hardly tethered to the ground.
Blow louder, wind, about
My square-set house, rattle the windows, lift
The trap-door to the loft above my head
And let it fall, clapping. Yell in the trees,
And throw a rotted elm-branch to the ground,
Flog the dry trailers of my climbing rose—
Make deep, O wind, my rest!

Edward Shanks

A LONELY PLACE

The leafless trees, the untidy stack
  Last rainy summer raised in haste,
Watch the sky turn from fair to black
  And watch the river fill and waste ;

But never a footstep comes to trouble
  The sea-gulls in the new-sown corn,
Or pigeons rising from late stubble
  And flashing lighter as they turn.

Or if a footstep comes, 'tis mine
  Sharp on the road or soft on grass :
Silence divides along my line
  And shuts behind me as I pass.

No other comes, no labourer
  To cut his shaggy truss of hay,
Along the road no traveller,
  Day after day, day after day.

And even I, when I come here,
  Move softly on, subdued and still,
Lonely as death, though I can hear
  Men shouting on the other hill.

Day after day, though no one sees,
  The lonely place no different seems ;
The trees, the stack, still images
  Constant in who can say whose dreams ?

J. C. SQUIRE

ELEGY

J. C. Squire

I vaguely wondered what you were about,
  But never wrote when you had gone away;
Assumed you better, quenched the uneasy doubt
  You might need faces, or have things to say.
  Did I think of you last evening? Dead you lay.
    O bitter words of conscience!
    I hold the simple message,
And fierce with grief the awakened heart cries out:
    'It shall not be to-day;

It is still yesterday; there is time yet!'
  Sorrow would strive backward to wrench the sun,
But the sun moves. Our onward course is set,
  The wake streams out, the engine pulses run
  Droning, a lonelier voyage is begun.
    It is all too late for turning,
    You are past all mortal signal,
There will be time for nothing but regret
    And the memory of things done!

The quiet voice that always counselled best,
  The mind that so ironically played
Yet for mere gentleness forebore the jest.
  The proud and tender heart that sat in shade
  Nor once solicited another's aid,
    Yet was so grateful always
    For trifles lightly given,
The silences, the melancholy guessed
    Sometimes, when your eyes strayed.

J. C. Squire

But always when you turned, you talked the more.
Through all our literature your way you took
With modest ease ; yet would you soonest pore,
Smiling, with most affection in your look,
On the ripe ancient and the curious nook.
Sage travellers, learnèd printers,
Divines and buried poets,
You knew them all, but never half your lore
Was drawn from any book.

Stories and jests from field and town and port,
And odd neglected scraps of history
From everywhere, for you were of the sort,
Cool and refined, who like rough company :
Carter and barmaid, hawker and bargee,
Wise pensioners and boxers
With whom you drank, and listened
To legends of old revelry and sport
And customs of the sea.

I hear you : yet more clear than all one note,
One sudden hail I still remember best,
That came on sunny days from one afloat
And drew me to the pane in certain quest
Of a long brown face, bare arms and flimsy vest,
In fragments through the branches,
Above the green reflections :
Paused by the willows in your varnished boat
You, with your oars at rest.

Did that come back to you when you were dying ?
I think it did : you had much leisure there,
And, with the things we knew, came quietly flying
Memories of things you had seen we knew not where.

You watched again with meditative stare
Places where you had wandered,
Golden and calm in distance :
Voices from all your altering past came sighing
On the soft Hampshire air.

For there you sat a hundred miles away,
A rug upon your knees, your hands gone frail,
And daily bade your farewell to the day,
A music blent of trees and clouds a-sail
And figures in some old neglected tale :
And watched the sunset gathering,
And heard the birdsong fading,
And went within when the last sleepy lay
Passed to a farther vale,

Never complaining, and stepped up to bed
More and more slow, a tall and sunburnt man
Grown bony and bearded, knowing you would be dead
Before the summer, glad your life began
Even thus to end, after so short a span,
And mused a space serenely,
Then fell to easy slumber,
At peace, content. For never again your head
Need make another plan.

Most generous, most gentle, most discreet,
Who left us ignorant to spare us pain :
We went our ways with too forgetful feet
And missed the chance that would not come again,
Leaving with thoughts on pleasure bent, or gain,
Fidelity unattested
And services unrendered :
The ears are closed, the heart has ceased to beat,
And now all proof is vain.

J. C. Squire

Too late for other gifts, I give you this,
Who took from you so much, so carelessly,
On your far brows a first and phantom kiss,
On your far grave a careful elegy.
For one who loved all life and poetry,
Sorrow in music bleeding,
And friendship's last confession.
But even as I speak that inner hiss
Softly accuses me,

Saying: Those brows are senseless, deaf that tomb,
This is the callous, cold resort of art.
'I give you this.' What do I give? to whom?
Words to the air, and balm to my own heart,
To its old luxurious and commanded smart.
An end to all this tuning,
This cynical masquerading;
What comfort now in that far final gloom
Can any song impart?

O yet I see you dawning from some heaven,
Who would not suffer self-reproach to live
In one to whom your friendship once was given.
I catch a vision, faint and fugitive,
Of a dark face with eyes contemplative,
Deep eyes that smile in silence,
And parted lips that whisper,
'Say nothing more, old friend, of being forgiven,
There is nothing to forgive.'

MEDITATION IN LAMPLIGHT

J. C. Squire

What deaths men have died, not fighting but impotent.
Hung on the wire, between trenches, burning and freezing,
Groaning for water with armies of men so near ;
The fall over cliff, the clutch at the rootless grass,
The beach rushing up, the whirling, the turning head-first ;
Stiff writhings of strychnine, taken in error or haste,
Angina pectoris, shudders of the heart ;
Failure and crushing by flying weight to the ground,
Claws and jaws, the stink of a lion's breath ;
Swimming, a white belly, a crescent of teeth,
Agony, and a spirting shredded limb,
And crimson blood staining the green water ;
And, horror of horrors, the slow grind on the rack,
The breaking bones, the stretching and bursting skin,
Perpetual fainting and waking to see above
The down-thrust mocking faces of cruel men,
With the power of mercy, who gloat upon shrieks for mercy.

O pity me, God ! O God, make tolerable,
Make tolerable the end that awaits for me,
And give me courage to die when the time comes,
When the time comes as it must, however it comes,
That I shrink not nor scream, gripped by the jaws of the vice ;
For the thought of it turns me sick, and my heart stands still,
Knocks and stands still. O fearful, fearful Shadow,
Kill me, let me die to escape the terror of thee !

J. C. Squire

A tap. Come in! Oh, no, I am perfectly well,
Only a little tired. Take this one, it's softer.
How are things going with you? Will you have some coffee?
Well, of course it's trying sometimes, but never mind,
It will probably be all right. Carry on, and keep cheerful.
I shouldn't, if I were you, meet trouble half-way,
It is always best to take everything as it comes.

LATE SNOW

J. C. Squire

The heavy train through the dim country went rolling, rolling,
Interminably passing misty snow-covered plough-land ridges
That merged in the snowy sky; came turning meadows, fences,
Came gullies and passed, and ice-coloured streams under frozen bridges.

Across the travelling landscape evenly drooped and lifted
The telegraph wires, thick ropes of snow in the windless air;
They drooped and paused and lifted again to unseen summits,
Drawing the eyes and soothing them, often, to a drowsy stare.

Singly in the snow the ghosts of trees were softly pencilled,
Fainter and fainter, in distance fading, into nothingness gliding,
But sometimes a crowd of the intricate silver trees of fairyland
Passed, close and intensely clear, the phantom world hiding.

O untroubled these moving mantled miles of shadowless shadows,
And lovely the film of falling flakes; so wayward and slack;
But I thought of many a mother-bird screening her nestlings,
Sitting silent with wide bright eyes, snow on her back.

FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG

SEASCAPE

Francis Brett Young

Over that morn hung heaviness, until,
Near sunless noon, we heard the ship's bell beating
A melancholy staccato on dead metal;
Saw the bare-footed watch come running aft;
Felt, far below, the sudden telegraph jangle
Its harsh metallic challenge, thrice repeated:
Stand to. Half-speed ahead. Slow. Stop her!
They stopped.
The plunging pistons sank like a stopped heart:
She held, she swayed, a hulk, a hollow carcass
Of blistered iron that the grey-green, waveless,
Unruffled tropic waters slapped languidly.

And, in that pause, a sinister whisper ran:
Burial at Sea! a Portuguese official . . .
Poor fever-broken devil from Mozambique:
Came on half tight: the doctor calls it heat-stroke.
Why do they travel steerage? It's the exchange:
So many million *reis* to the pound!
What did he look like? No one ever saw him:
Took to his bunk, and drank and drank and died.
They're ready! Silence!
We clustered to the rail,
Curious and half-ashamed. The well-deck spread
A comfortable gulf of segregation
Between ourselves and death. *Burial at sea . . .*
The master holds a black book at arm's length;
His droning voice comes for'ard: *This our brother . . .*
We therefore commit his body to the deep
To be turned into corruption . . . The bo's'n whispers
Hoarsely behind his hand: *Now, all together!*
The hatch-cover is tilted; a mummy of sailcloth

Francis Brett Young

Well ballasted with iron shoots clear of the poop ;
Falls, like a diving gannet. The green sea closes
Its burnished skin ; the snaky swell smoothes over . . .
While he, the man of the steerage, goes down, down,
Feet foremost, sliding swiftly down the dim water,
Swift to escape
Those plunging shapes with pale, empurpled bellies
That swirl and veer about him. He goes down
Unerringly, as though he knew the way
Through green, through gloom, to absolute watery darkness,
Where no weed sways nor curious fin quivers :
To the sad, sunless deeps where, endlessly,
A downward drift of death spreads its wan mantle
In the wave-moulded valleys that shall enfold him
Till the sea give up its dead.

There shall he lie dispersed amid great riches :
Such gold, such arrogance, so many bold hearts !
All the sunken armadas pressed to powder
By weight of incredible seas ! That mingled wrack
No livening sun shall visit till the crust
Of earth be riven, or this rolling planet
Reel on its axis ; till the moon-chained tides,
Unloosed, deliver up that white Atlantis
Whose naked peaks shall bleach above the slaked
Thirst of Sahara, fringed by weedy tangles
Of Atlas's drown'd cedars, frowning eastward
To where the sands of India lie cold,
And heap'd Himalaya's a rib of coral
Slowly uplifted, grain on grain. . . .

We dream
Too long ! Another jangle of alarum

Stabs at the engines : *Slow. Half-speed. Full-speed!* *Francis*
The great bearings rumble ; the screw churns, *Brett*
frothing *Young*
Opaque water to downward-swelling plumes
Milky as wood-smoke. A shoal of flying-fish
Spurts out like animate spray. The warm breeze
wakens ;
And we pass on, forgetting,
Toward the solemn horizon of bronzed cumulus
That bounds our brooding sea, gathering gloom
That, when night falls, will dissipate in flaws
Of watery lightning, washing the hot sky,
Cleansing all hearts of heat and restlessness,
Until, with day, another blue be born.

SCIROCCO

Out of that high pavilion
Where the sick, wind-harassed sun
In the whiteness of the day
Ghostly shone and stole away—
Parchèd with the utter thirst
Of unnumbered Libyan sands,
Thou, cloud-gathering spirit, burst
Out of arid Africa
To the tideless sea, and smote
On our pale, moon-coolèd lands
The hot breath of a lion's throat.

And that furnace-heated breath
Blew into my placid dreams
The heart of fire from whence it came :
Haunt of beauty and of death
Where the forest breaks in flame
Of flaunting blossom, where the flood
Of life pulses hot and stark,
Where a wing'd death breeds in mud
And tumult of tree-shadowed streams—
Black waters, desolately hurled
Through the uttermost, lost, dark,
Secret places of the world.

There, O swift and terrible
Being, wast thou born ; and thence,
Like a demon loosed from hell,
Stripped with rending wings the dense
Echoing forests, till their bowed
Plumes of trees like tattered cloud
Were toss'd and torn, and cried aloud
As the wood were rack'd with pain :

Thence thou freed'st thy wings, and soon
From the moaning, stricken plain
In whorlèd eagle-soarings rose
To melt the sun-defeating snows
Of the Mountains of the Moon,
To dull their glaciers with fierce breath,
To slip the avalanches' rein,
To set the laughing torrents free
On the tented desert beneath,
Where men of thirst must wither and die
While the vultures stare in the sun's eye ;
Where slowly sifting sands are strown
On broken cities, whose bleaching bones
Whiten in moonlight stone on stone.

Francis Brett Young

Over their pitiful dust thy blast
Passed in columns of whirling sand,
Leapt the desert and swept the strand
Of the cool and quiet sea,
Gathering mighty shapes, and proud
Phantoms of monstrous, wave-born cloud,
And northward drove this panoply
Till the sky seemed charging on the land. . . .

Yet, in that plumèd helm, the most
Of thy hot power was cooled or lost,
So that it came to me at length,
Faint and tepid and shorn of strength,
To shiver an olive-grove that heaves
A myriad moonlight-coloured leaves,
And in the stone-pine's dome set free
A murmur of the middle sea :
A puff of warm air in the night
So spent by its impetuous flight

Francis Brett Young

It scarce invades my pillar'd closes,—
To waft their fragrance from the sweet
Buds of my lemon-coloured roses
Or strew blown petals at my feet:
To kiss my cheek with a warm sigh
And in the tired darkness die.

THE QUAILS

Francis Brett Young

(In the south of Italy the peasants put out the eyes of a captured quail so that its cries may attract the flocks of spring migrants into their nets.)

All through the night
I have heard the stuttering call of a blind quail,
A caged decoy, under a cairn of stones,
Crying for light as the quails cry for love.

Other wanderers,
Northward from Africa winging on numb pinions, dazed
With beating winds and the sobbing of the sea,
Hear, in a breath of sweet land-herbage, the call
Of the blind one, their sister. . . .
Hearing, their fluttered hearts
Take courage, and they wheel in their dark flight,
Knowing that their toil is over, dreaming to see
The white stubbles of Abruzzi smitten with dawn,
And spilt grain lying in the furrows, the squandered gold
That is the delight of quails in their spring mating.

Land-scents grow keener,
Penetrating the dank and bitter odour of brine
That whitens their feathers ;
Far below, the voice of their sister calls them
To plenty, and sweet water, and fulfilment.
Over the pallid margin of dim seas breaking,
Over the thickening in the darkness that is land,
They fly. Their flight is ended. Wings beat no more.
Downward they drift, one by one, like dark petals,
Slowly, listlessly falling
Into the mouth of horror :
The nets. . . .

Where men come trampling and crying with bright lanterns,
Plucking their weak, entangled claws from the meshes of net,
Clutching the soft brown bodies mottled with olive,
Crushing the warm, fluttering flesh, in hands stained with blood,
Till their quivering hearts are stilled, and the bright eyes,
That are like a polished agate, glaze in death.

But the blind one, in her wicker cage, without ceasing
Haunts this night of spring with her stuttering call,
Knowing nothing of the terror that walks in darkness,
Knowing only that some cruelty has stolen the light
That is life, and that she must cry until she dies.

I, in the darkness,
Heard, and my heart grew sick. But I know that to-morrow
A smiling peasant will come with a basket of quails
Wrapped in vine-leaves, prodding them with blood-stained fingers,
Saying, 'Signore, you must cook them thus, and thus,
With a sprig of basil inside them.' And I shall thank him,
Carrying the piteous carcases into the kitchen
Without a pang, without shame.

'Why should I be ashamed? Why should I rail
Against the cruelty of men? Why should I pity,
Seeing that there is no cruelty which men can imagine
To match the subtle dooms that are wrought against them
By blind spores of pestilence: seeing that each of us,

Lured by dim hopes, flutters in the toils of death *Francis*
On a cold star that is spinning blindly through space *Brett*
Into the nets of time ? ' *Young*

So cried I, bitterly thrusting pity aside,
Closing my lids to sleep. But sleep came not,
And pity, with sad eyes,
Crept to my side, and told me
That the life of all creatures is brave and pityful
Whether they be men, with dark thoughts to vex them,
Or birds, wheeling in the swift joys of flight,
Or brittle ephemerids, spinning to death in the haze
Of gold that quivers on dim evening waters ;
Nor would she be denied.
The harshness died
Within me, and my heart
Was caught and fluttered like the palpitant heart
Of a brown quail, flying
To the call of her blind sister,
And death, in the spring night.

Francis Brett Young

SONG AT SANTA CRUZ

Were there lovers in the lanes of Atlantis :
Meeting lips and twining fingers
In the mild Atlantis springtime ?
How should I know
If there were lovers in the lanes of Atlantis
When the dark sea drowned her mountains
Many ages ago ?

Were there poets in the paths of Atlantis :
Eager poets, seeking beauty
To adorn the women they worshipped ?
How can I say
If there were poets in the paths of Atlantis ?
For the waters that drowned her mountains
Washed their beauty away.

Were there women in the ways of Atlantis :
Foolish women, who loved, as I do,
Dreaming that mortal love was deathless ?
Ask me not now
If there were women in the ways of Atlantis :
There was no woman in all her mountains
Wonderful as thou !

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